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REMARKS

On a Late

PAMPHLET,

ENTITLED,

Chriſtianity not founded on Argument.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

By *JOHN LELAND*, D. D.

AUTHOR of *An Anſwer to Chriſtianity as Old as the Creation*, by Dr. *Tindal*:

AND

The Divine Authority of the Old and New Teſtament Aſſerted, &c. againſt *The Moral Philoſopher.*

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IT is proper to advertiſe the Reader, that the Letter now publiſh'd, and another which is to follow it, were written by the Author, ſome time ſince, at the Requeſt of a Friend, before he had ſeen any of the Anſwers that have been made to that Pamphlet. After reading ſome of theſe Anſwers, he judg'd it unneceſſary to publiſh theſe Remarks: But as ſome Perſons, for whoſe Judgment he has a very great Regard, were of opinion they might ſtill be of Uſe, he has conſented to the Publication.

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ERRAT. P. 8. lin. 31. for *Truth* read *Faith*.

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REMARKS on a late Pamphlet, entitled, Chriſtianity not founded on Argument, *&c.*

SIR,

I Now ſend you, according to your Deſire, ſome Remarks on a Pamphlet that has made ſome noiſe, and which hath a very odd Title, *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument.* It is but very lately that I read it, tho' it be a conſiderable Time ſince it was firſt publiſhed. For, beſides that I live at a diſtance from your great Metropolis, I have ſeen ſo much of theſe Gentlemen's Way of Writing, and have met with ſo little to inform the Underſtanding, or that can be called fair Reaſoning and Argument, that I confeſs my Curioſity is not much raiſed by any thing that appears from that Quarter. But upon your acquainting me, that it was repreſented as a ſubtil Attack upon Chriſtianity, and deſiring my Thoughts upon it, I have read it over with ſome Care. The way of treating the Subject, and the Turn given to Things, is new and uncommon, the Style ſprightly and agreeable; but upon the moſt impartial Conſideration, I cannot think that Chriſtianity has much to fear from this Gentleman, any more than from thoſe that have gone before him.

He has choſen a Manner of Writing, which, it is probable, he ſuppoſed might anſwer his Purpoſe;

but which I think gives one no advantageous Opinion of the Sincerity and Candour of his Mind. He frequently ſpeaks with great ſeeming Regard of our Saviour, of divine Faith, and of the Grace of God and his Holy Spirit. He makes much uſe of Phraſes that have been employed by good Perſons in a pious Senſe; but it is plain, that all this is manag'd ſo as to expoſe Religion and Faith to the Deriſion and Contempt of Mankind. He carries the Ridicule ſo far, as to mix it with his Addreſſes to the Supreme Being. He formally pretends to *offer up his moſt ardent Prayers in behalf* of his Friend *at the Throne of Grace, that God would be pleaſed himſelf to illuminate and irradiate his Mind with a perfect and thorough Conviction of the Truth of his holy Goſpel; that the ſame Holy Spirit, that firſt dictated that divine Law, would powerfully ſet to his Seal, and atteſt its Authority in his Heart.* With more to the ſame purpoſe *. Now, ſuppoſing what can ſcarce be doubted from the whole of his Pamphlet, that he does not believe the Truth and divine Original of the Goſpel, and that he looks upon the Influence of the Holy Ghoſt to be meer abſurd Cant and Enthuſiaſm, to pretend in a ſolemn manner to apply to God to illuminate him with a perfect and thorough Conviction of the Truth of his holy Goſpel, and to ſend his Holy Spirit to atteſt its Authority in his Heart, ſeems to me to be a carrying Profaneneſs to a great height. Nor can I well conceive, how any Man that believes there is a Supreme Being, who is a Lover of Truth and Goodneſs,

* P. 112.

Goodneſs, and who concerns himſelf in the Affairs of Men at all, can allow himſelf to be guilty of ſuch a ſolemn Grimace and Mockery.

You may perhaps think this Cenſure a little ſevere; but I cannot help adding, that it appears to me upon the moſt cloſe and impartial Conſideration, that the Tendency of his Pamphlet is to deſtroy all Religion and Reaſon itſelf, and to take from Men all Principles of every kind, thoſe of natural Religion as well as reveal'd. With regard to Chriſtianity, or the Faith of the Goſpel, that it is his Deſign to expoſe it to Ridicule, I think no Man that reads his Pamphlet with any Attention can doubt. It is, according to the Repreſentation he gives of it, ſuch a ſtrange and inconſiſtent thing, that no Man can tell what to make of it. It is a Believing without Underſtanding, without rational Conviction and Evidence; a Believing we know not why, and not only without Reaſon, but againſt it. It is a Faith that has nothing to do with *hiſtorical Evidence* or *moral Certainty*, or with the Scripture-Account of Facts relating to our Saviour; a Faith that *cannot be taught*, and which it *requires no Time to attain*. And therefore no Man ſhould trouble himſelf to look for a Reaſon for believing, or take any pains either to get Information himſelf, or to inſtruct others in the Faith; and I think the manifeſt Tendency of this Scheme, if purſued, would be to baniſh Faith and Chriſtianity out of the World.

But if he endeavours to banter us out of our Faith, perhaps he leaves us Reaſon and natural Religion to guide us. No: this he alſo effectually diſcards.

The Strain of his arguing is to ſhew, that no Religion can be rational, that is not founded on a free and impartial Examination and Enquiry. And at the ſame time, he does all he can to ſhew, that a free and impartial Examination is an impoſſible thing. That the Generality of Mankind are under a natural Incapacity for Reaſoning themſelves, or underſtanding it when propoſed by others, and are incapable of judging if *there be the leaſt of Induction or Inference in the caſe* *. And that the *ableſt and beſt of Men* are *diſqualified for fair Reaſoning* or impartial Judging by their *natural Prejudices*; the Power of which he repreſents to be ſo great, that it *is as abſolute a Diſqualification for ſuch a Trial as the greateſt natural Incapacity* †. From whence it follows, that no Man living is capable of reaſoning fairly or judging truly. He takes a great deal of pains, to ſhew that Reaſon can not be certain of any thing, nor of force enough to controul and govern the Paſſions; that it is ever varying and unſtable, and can never come to a fixed Determination in any one Point whatſoever: And indeed, conſidering the Repreſentation he makes of it, I cannot ſee but that he had as good deny all Men any Uſe of Reaſon or the intellectual Faculty at all; ſince, according to him, it muſt be of little or no advantage, and only tends to perplex Mens Minds with endleſs Uncertainties and Diſtruſts. Accordingly he has choſen to adorn his Title-Page with a Paſſage of *Cotta* in *Cicero*, where he is diſputing againſt Reaſon and againſt Providence; and the Deſign of which is to ſhew, that Reaſon is an uſeleſs and even a pernicious thing. Several

* P. 17, 18. † P. 23.

Several Parts of his Pamphlet ſeem to be particularly levelled againſt what has been uſually thought of great advantage and importance, early Inſtruction and Education. He frequently argues, that if Religion be ſuppoſed to be a rational Thing, it would be a wicked Attempt to endeavour to inſtruct Children in it; for this would be to prejudice and prepoſſeſs their tender Minds, and deſtroy that free Enquiry which Reaſon preſcribes. And as to Faith, they cannot be inſtructed in it, ſince this is a thing that *cannot be taught*, and the Underſtanding has nothing to do with it. All Men therefore muſt be left entirely to themſelves without Inſtruction, under pretence of leaving them to the Grace of God, and to the Guidance of his Spirit. And if this alſo be exploded, as there is great reaſon to think it will, by this Gentleman and his Aſſociates, as unintelligible Cant and Enthuſiaſm; and ſuch it certainly is, according to the Deſcription he gives of it, and which undoubtedly was intended by him to expoſe it to Contempt and Ridicule: I ſay, if this alſo be diſcarded as well as Faith and Reaſon, then I ſee nothing left to guide Men but their Paſſions, to which they muſt be given up without reſerve, and the Force of which he ſo feelingly deſcribes.*

And now we may ſee what a hopeful way Mankind would be in, if they were to follow the Tendency of this Writer's Scheme. And upon what Foundation ſuch Gentlemen as theſe can ſet up for Benefactors to Mankind, who endeavour to ſet them looſe from all Principles, and to ridicule Reaſon

* P. 30, 31.

ſon and Religion out of the World; or what Good they can propoſe to Society or to their Country by it, is hard to ſee. Some others that have appeared againſt Revelation, have at leaſt in ſhew pretended to ſet up Reaſon and Natural Religion for a ſufficient Guide: But this Gentleman gives ſuch an account of Faith and Reaſon too, and plays the one in ſuch a manner againſt the other, that it looks as if it were his Deſign to deſtroy all Regard to either of them, and to ſet aſide all Religion at once, Natural as well as Reveal'd. The manifeſt Tendency of his Performance, is to engage Mankind to give themſelves no Concern about any Religion at all, or to educate their Children in any Principles, the natural Conſequence of which would be a giving them up to Vice and Barbariſm. But it is to be hoped, that when once People are made ſenſible of the Tendency of ſuch a Scheme, it will in a great meaſure prove an Antidote to the Poiſon of it; and that Piety and Good Senſe is not ſo far loſt in the World, that Men will lightly ſuffer themſelves to be banter'd out of their Religion and Reaſon too. Such Attempts, one would be apt to think, ſhould, with Perſons that will allow themſelves time for Reflection, turn to the advantage of Chriſtianity. For it is natural to conclude, that if the Enemies of Chriſtianity are oblig'd to uſe Arguments againſt it, which, if good for any thing, would be equally good againſt all Religion, it is a ſtrong Preſumption of its Truth, and that all Religion muſt ſtand or fall with it. For would any Man in his Senſes, that underſtands Argument at all, or that is in any degree a Judge of good Reaſoning, endeavour to

expoſe

expoſe Chriſtianity by Arguments and Mediums that militate againſt all Religion and all Certainty of Reaſon, if he thought he could attack Chriſtianity with ſucceſs any other way?

The ſame Obſervation may be made with regard to what this Writer ſo often repeats about moral Certainty and Evidence. When Men think they can ſhew that any Teſtimony or Evidence is not to be depended on, or that the Accounts of any paſt Facts are uncertain and to be ſuſpected, the Method that Common-Senſe directs to in ſuch a Caſe, is not to inveigh againſt all Evidence and Teſtimony whatſoever, and againſt all Records of paſt Facts, as if they were all abſolutely uncertain; but to produce Reaſons to invalidate that particular Evidence and Teſtimony, and ſhew why thoſe particular Accounts are not to be depended on. And this undoubtedly is the Method the Enemies of Chriſtianity would take, if they thought they were able to invalidate the Evidence produced for the Goſpel-Records. But inſtead of this, they ridiculouſly fly out into general Invectives againſt all human Teſtimony and all moral Evidence. They harangue pathetically upon the Uncertainty of all paſt Facts, and all Accounts that are tranſmitted to us through the hands of fallible Men; that is, all Records, Laws, and Accounts whatſoever of things which we ourſelves did not ſee. This diſcovers a Conſciouſneſs, that the Evidence for the Facts and Records of Chriſtianity is ſo ſtrong, that they are not able to ſubvert it any other way, than by deſtroying the Credit of all Teſtimony, and all paſt Facts and Records whatſoever. I ſay, we muſt

ſuppoſe

ſuppoſe they are ſenſible of this, or elſe we muſt ſuppoſe them to be the very worſt Managers of a Cauſe, the moſt miſerable Bunglers, of any that ever pretended to Reaſon or Argument, which I believe they would be very loth to be thought to be.

Theſe are ſome of the general Reflections that occurred to me upon reading this Pamphlet. But before I proceed to a diſtinct Conſideration of it, it will not be improper to lay before you the Idea this Writer gives of the Nature of that Faith which the Goſpel requires, and for which he pretends to be an Advocate, and of the Principle upon which it is founded, as far as I am capable of forming a Notion of it, by carefully comparing ſeveral Parts of his Book. And this will alſo furniſh a farther Proof of this Gentleman's Candour and Sincerity.

He repreſents *a rational Faith*, that is, as he himſelf explains it, *an Aſſent to revealed Truths founded upon the Conviction of the Underſtanding, as a falſe and unwarrantable Notion* *. And therefore ſets himſelf to prove, that in the Goſpel *no Appeal to the Underſtanding was ever made or intended* †. He talks as if Infants were capable of Faith, before they are capable of exerting any one Act of Reaſon; and that the *Infant's Belief anſwers as effectually all the Demands of the Goſpel, as that of the firſt Proficient, and higheſt Graduate in Divinity* ‡. And as he explains the firſt Beginning of Truth to be without Reaſon, or any Uſe of the Underſtanding, ſo he repreſents the *Perſeverance*

* P. 7. † P. 35, &c. ‡ P. 9, 69, 114.

verance in the Faith required in the Goſpel, to be *a blind and fooliſh Obſtinacy to a preſent Notion, a diſavowing all future Uſe of Reaſon for our Security* *. And ſpeaking of *the true and genuine Faith*, which, ſaith he, *I contend for*, he declares, that that Perſon *beſt enjoys it, who never aſked himſelf one ſingle Queſtion about it, and never dealt at all in the Evidence of Reaſon* †. Agreeably to which, he repreſents that *Zeal* for the *Faith*, which the Goſpel recommends, to be a blind irrational Heat, *a potent Fire, a Zeal not according to Knowledge* ‡. And tho' he obſerves, that we are *ordered to be taught the* Faith *in our Childhood*, yet he expreſly affirms, that Faith and Religion *can never be a thing that is to be taught*, and that it *muſt needs be ſomething that does not require Time to attain* ‖. Accordingly he ſpeaks of Faith all along, as if it were a thing abſolutely completed at once, and which admits of no Degrees; and ſets himſelf to ſhew, that Chriſt and his Apoſtles always required Perſons to believe in an Inſtant, without allowing any time for Deliberation, or offering any Evidence to convince their Minds. *The Conviction*, as he expreſſes it, *was to precede the Evidence* **. And leſt it ſhould be alledged, that the Miracles wrought by Chriſt, and by the Apoſtles in his Name, were Evidences of his Divine Miſſion, he endeavours to ſhew that Miracles could be no Proofs at all, nor were ever intended by our Saviour himſelf as ſuch ††. And finally, he affirms, that the firſt Principle of Faith is really what Philoſophers call *arguing in a Circle, and begging the*

* P. 11. † P. 29. ‡ P. 25. ‖ P. 17. ** P. 37—42. †† P. 46—50.

Queſtion *. According to the Repreſentation he here gives of the Faith which the Goſpel requires, it is not to be wonder'd at, that he repreſents Perſons of the meaneſt Underſtandings to be beſt qualified for Faith, and claims Men of the *brighteſt Intellectuals* on the ſide of Infidelity †.

But this is not all: The Faith required in the Goſpel, according to this Writer's Repreſentation of it, is not only a Perſuaſion without any Conviction of the Underſtanding, or any rational Evidence to ſupport it; but it is directly contrary to Reaſon. He affirms, that there is *an irreconcilable Repugnance in their Natures betwixt Reaſon and Belief* ‡. And endeavours at large to ſhew, that they are *removed at the utmoſt diſtance from all poſſibility of amicable Terms and Reconcilement*; and, as he expreſſes it in the Margin of *Pag.* 81. that *Religion cannot admit the leaſt Alliance with Reaſoning*. And accordingly he aſſerts, that *there is no one Leſſon that the Holy Writings have taken more care to inculcate, than this of denying our Reaſon*; that we are there ſtrictly enjoined to *captivate our Reaſon*, i. e. as he explains it, *to lay it under the moſt abſolute Reſtraint and Prohibition, not to permit it the leaſt Opportunity or Freedom to exert itſelf, or interpoſe on any occaſion whatever* ‖.

Such is the goodly Repreſentation this Gentleman is pleaſed to make of what he calls the *genuine Faith* of the Goſpel. And at the ſame time he frequently repeats it, that God requires this Faith of all Perſons under pain of Damnation: that is, he requires them all, on pain of Damnation,

* P. 78. † P. 72. ‡ P. 70, 86. ‖ P. 84.

tion, to believe without Evidence or any Conviction of the Understanding, to believe in an Instant, and *every Moment of* their *Lives* *, even before they are capable of Understanding, to believe without Reason and against it.

Agreeable to this Description of Faith, is the Account he gives of the Influence of the Holy Ghost, which he makes to be the sole Principle of this Faith. He represents him, as working a full Persuasion in the Soul, without any Conviction of the Understanding, and as engaging Men to believe at once, without knowing why they believe. That he *irradiates the Souls of Believers at once with an irresistible Light from Heaven, that flashes Conviction in a moment; and that thus our Faith is completed in an Instant, and the most perfect and finished Creed produced at once, without any tedious Progress in Deductions of our own* †. He calls this a *secret Whisper*, *Inspiration*, and *infused Evidence* ‡. And that it is *a constant and particular Revelation imparted separately and supernaturally to every Individual* ‖. And this he explains to be of such a nature, as to render all outward Instructions entirely needless. That there is *no occasion to apply to Libraries for farther Information*; nor must *we be left to take any the least part of our Instructions from one another* **. That in interpreting Scripture, *there must not be any thing left to the Skill of the Workman* ††. So that all Help of Commentators, Knowledge of Languages, *&c.* is to be discarded. For the Holy Ghost abides for ever as an *uncorrupted Commentator in our own*

* P. 17. † P. 59. ‡ P. 58. ‖ P. 113. ** P. 60. †† P. 61.

Breaſts *. Yea, the Scriptures themſelves are, according to his account of the matter, entirely needleſs. He oppoſes the inward Atteſtations of the Spirit, to *mere manuſcript Authorities, and Paper-Revelations*, as he calls the Scriptures by way of Contempt. Thoſe that are inſtructed by the Spirit, need not concern themſelves about the *Credit of antient Miracles*, or the *Genuineneſs of diſtant Records*, nor will think any *human Teſtimony* (and this Writer always repreſents the Teſtimony by which the Goſpel-Records are conveyed to us under that Idea) *of conſequence enough to engage a Moment's Attention upon this Subject* †. So that according to his Repreſentation of the matter, a Man that has the Spirit, will not regard the Accounts given us in the Goſpel of the Life, Miracles, Reſurrection, Aſcenſion of our Saviour, and the other extraordinary Facts there recorded, as of any conſequence at all, and will believe as well without them as with them.

He ſpeaks as if all Believers were ſo far under the Influence of the Spirit, as to be rendered infallible. That the Holy Ghoſt, that *great Dictator and infallible Guide* ‡, has *promiſed to abide with us to the End of the World, that we might not be left liable one Moment to a Poſſibility of Error and Impoſition* ‖. And he repreſents this Spirit as *ſpeaking the ſame thing to all*, and bringing them *to think all alike* **. So that, according to the Account this Gentleman is pleaſed to put upon us as the Goſpel-Account of Faith, and of the Spirit, all Believers are made to *think all alike*, tho' we plainly ſee they

* P. 61. † P. 59, 60. ‡ P. 56. ‖ P. 60. ** P. 58.

they differ from one another in ſeveral things; and tho' they hold contradictory Sentiments, yet they are all infallibly guided by the Holy Ghoſt, and *not liable one Moment* to be miſtaken.

Thus he places the ſole Foundation of the Chriſtian Faith upon a thing that is evidently falſe in fact, and that is, the immediate infallible Inſpiration of every particular Perſon. And at the ſame time he utterly diſcards all moral Certainty and Evidence, as if Faith had nothing to do with it; that is, the Evidence whereby the Goſpel-Hiſtory, the ſacred Records come down to us. He declares, that this *is indeed the higheſt Degree of rational Evidence that the Nature of the Subject can poſſibly admit of* *; but yet that it is altogether uncertain, and not to be depended on. He often degradingly calls it *human Teſtimony, in its Nature ever liable to Error*; and that it is *nothing more than the precarious Conjecture of a fallible Judge upon the traditional Teſtimony of a fallible Witneſs* †. That it is a Being *left to the Courteſy of a few Reporters* ‖. And that it is *to us no more than an uncertain Hearſay; the uncertain Aſſertions of fallible Men relating it after one another* **.

Thus have I laid together in one view the Account this Writer gives us of Faith, and of the Spirit, and the Evidence on which Chriſtianity is founded. This is what he calls the *Revealed and Scriptural Account of the matter* ††. And he applauds himſelf for having *pointed out what is really and poſitively the authorized Principle of Faith*; and for having *carried on his Detection of a falſe Principle*

* P. 32. † P. 31. ‖ P. 51. ** P. 52, 53. †† P. 68.

Principle to a ſatisfactory Concluſion in the Diſcovery of a true one *. And he declares with an Air of Aſſurance, that the Account he gives *depends not for its Support upon the bare Strength of any ſingle Quotation whatever, but on the joint Tendency and Tenor of the whole* †.

I do not think there can be a more complete Scheme of Abſurdity and Enthuſiaſm, than what this Gentleman here puts upon us for the true Scripture-Account of Faith, and of the Spirit, and of the Nature of Goſpel-Evidence; which he undoubtedly intends for expoſing the ſacred Writings, but which, with all equal Judges of things, tends only to expoſe the Unfairneſs of this Writer, and the little Regard he hath to Truth and Candour. But this is the way of theſe Gentlemen, in writing againſt Chriſtianity. They never can allow themſelves to give fair and equal Repreſentations of things, but throw them into falſe Lights, in order to make them appear ridiculous. In any other caſe but this, ſuch a Conduct would ſcarce be thought conſiſtent with common Honeſty. And I know not how to account for it, but that it proceeds from a Conſciouſneſs that they cannot ſucceed againſt Religion by fair Repreſentation and equal Argument.

The Account this Writer gives of the Nature and Grounds of the Chriſtian Faith, is not more abſurd in itſelf, than different from the Repreſentations made to us of it in Scripture. According to him, Faith and Religion is a thing that can *never be taught*; according to the Goſpel, Faith ordinarily

* P. 106. † P. 105.

ordinarily comes by *hearing* and teaching *. According to this Writer's Account of it Faith, is *completed at once*, made perfect *in an Inſtant*, and is not a thing that *requires Time to attain*. But according to the Repreſentation made of it in the Goſpel, Faith may be ſincere tho' weak, it admits of ſeveral Degrees, it is a thing capable of Growth, and which ordinarily takes time and pains for its Eſtabliſhment and Improvement †. Upon his Scheme, all outward Teaching is perfectly needleſs, and Chriſtians are not to receive *the leaſt Part of their Inſtructions from one another*; according to the Goſpel, outward Teaching is neceſſary; Chriſtians are exhorted to *teach and admoniſh one another*. And the Plan upon which the Chriſtian Church was eſtabliſhed was this, that they ſhould be formed into ſacred Aſſemblies, in which there ſhould be Perſons whoſe proper ſtated Office it ſhould be to teach, and in order to this to give themſelves to *Reading, to Exhortation and Doctrine*; and Proviſion was made for a Succeſſion of ſuch Perſons in the Church, who ſhould *be able to teach others alſo* ‖. The Faith recommended in the Goſpel is a Faith that is joined with Knowledge, and whereby the Underſtanding is enlightned **. But the Faith deſcribed by this Author is a Faith without Knowledge, and that has nothing to do with the Underſtanding. According to him, the Zeal for the Faith required of the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, is a Zeal not according to Knowledge; but in the Goſpel, a Zeal *not according to Knowledge*

* Rom. x. 14, 17. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. 2 Theſſ. i. 3. Jude 20. † Rom. xiv. 1. ‖ 2 Tim. ii. 2. ** Phil. i. 9. Col. i. 9, 10.

ledge is diſapproved, and repreſented as not a Zeal of the right kind *. Faith, according to his Repreſentation of it, is a thing for which no reaſon ſhould or can be given. But the contrary is plainly ſuppoſed in the Goſpel, where it is required of Chriſtians as a Duty, that they be *ready to give an Anſwer to thoſe that aſk* them a *Reaſon of the Hope* that is in them †. And it is inſiſted upon as a proper Qualification in the Teachers of the Goſpel, that they *be able to convince the Gainſayers* ‖. As he repreſents it, all Examination and Enquiry is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the Nature of Chriſtian Faith; whereas in the Goſpel, we are commanded to ſearch and try; an eminent Inſtance of which we have in the *Beræans*, who are highly commended for doing ſo; and their Believing is repreſented as the Reſult of their Examination and Enquiry **. According to his Account, the Chriſtian Faith has no dependance at all upon the Miracles or external Atteſtations given to our Saviour, or any of the extraordinary Facts recorded in the Goſpel; but according to the Account given us in Scripture, our Saviour appealed to the Miracles he wrought, as illuſtrious Atteſtations to his divine Miſſion; and the very End for which *theſe Things were written*, was, that we *might by them* be brought to *believe on the Name of the Son of God, and that believing we might have Life in his Name* ‡.

This may give a general Idea of this Gentleman's Performance; and perhaps ſuch a general View of it might be ſufficient. But at your deſire

* Rom x. 2. † 1 Pet. iii. 15. ‖ Tit. i. 9. ** 1 Theſſ. v. 21. Act. xvii. 11, 12. ‡ John xx. 31.

deſire I ſhall enter on a more particular Examination of it. The Strength of this Pamphlet, as far as it has any appearance of Reaſon or Argument, ſeems to me to lie chiefly in the former Part of it, where he undertakes and ſets himſelf formally to prove, that *Reaſon or the Intellectual Faculty could not poſſibly both from its own Nature and that of Religion, be the Principle intended by God to lead us into a true Faith* *. This is oddly and not very accurately expreſſed. But his Meaning evidently is, that it is not the Will and Deſign of God that we ſhould make uſe of our intellectual Faculty at all in believing, and that God never intended to lay any Evidence before our Underſtanding to induce us to believe, nor that our intellectual Faculty ſhould at all judge of the Evidence propoſed. This is what he applies himſelf formally to prove, and he ſeems to have a very good opinion of this Part of his Argument, which he thinks he has managed ſo as to render the other Part of his Pamphlet needleſs †.

His firſt Argument reſts upon this Foundation, that Men are required in the Goſpel *to think all alike.* And he thinks it a *prepoſterous Scheme, that of Unity in Opinion propoſed to be effected by Reaſoning* ‖. He makes the ſame Suppoſition in other Parts of his Book, concerning our being obliged or required *to think all alike*; that is, as he ſeems to underſtand it, to have exactly the ſame Sentiments in all Points in Matters of Religion. But this is not what Chriſtianity requires. The Paſſage that hath moſt of an appearance this way,

* P. 7. † P. 106. ‖ P. 8.

is that of St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians: Now I beſeech you, Brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that there be no Diviſions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the ſame Mind and in the ſame Judgment* *. But any one that carefully examines that Paſſage and the Context, will find that the Apoſtle's Meaning is not, that it was neceſſary for them to be perfectly of the ſame opinion in all ſpeculative Matters, to which he hath there no reference at all, but that they ſhould ſhun thoſe Factions and *Contentions*, that *Envying and Strife*, and that Party-Spirit that he heard was among them †; and that they ſhould be joined in Unity of Heart and Affection. In like manner, when he prays for the believing *Romans*, that the *God of all Patience and Conſolation would grant* them to be *like-minded one towards another, according to Chriſt Jeſus, that with one Mind and one Mouth* they might *glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* ‖; which is another Paſſage referred to by this Writer **: his Deſign is not to inſiſt upon it as of abſolute neceſſity, that there ſhould be a ſtrict Uniformity in Opinion; but that they ſhould preſerve an Unity of Affection, and ſhould all join in glorifying God with one Heart and Mouth, which he there ſuppoſes they might do, notwithſtanding ſmaller Differences. Nothing is more evident than it is from many Paſſages in that Epiſtle, particularly the whole XIVth Chapter, that the Apoſtle is very far from inſinuating, that every

* 1 Cor. i. 10. † 1 Cor. i. 11. iii. 3. ‖ Rom. xv. 5, 6. ** P. 65.

every Difference of Sentiments with regard to any thing in Religion is inconſiſtent with a true Chriſtian Faith. For he there ſuppoſes the Chriſtians to whom he writes to differ in ſeveral things, and exhorts them to mutual Forbearance, and not to judge or condemn one another on account of thoſe Differences. That they that are *ſtrong* ought to bear the Infirmities of the *weak*, i. e. of thoſe that *are weak in Faith*; and that they ſhould be united in Love and Charity, and in a brotherly Diſpoſition towards one another. And this ſeems to be every where the Meaning of that Phraſe, of being *like-minded*, and *of one Mind*, or *the ſame Mind* *. This alſo is what the Apoſtle intends by their *keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace* †. A noble Paſſage, that breathes an admirable Strain of Charity, tho' this Gentleman ſeems very willing by an odd Gloſs to turn it into Ridicule ‖. What he repreſents in a gibing way as a great Abſurdity, is very true, that tho' Men *cannot be all of one Opinion, they may be of one Faith*; that is, *one Faith* in the ſenſe St. *Paul* ſpeaks of it, *viz.* one Faith in the great Eſſentials of it; and, with regard to leſſer Matters, they ſhould, as he there adviſes, *forbear one another in Love*. This forbearing one another, which is ſo often urged as the Duty of Chriſtians, plainly ſuppoſes that there is an Allowance in the Chriſtian Scheme for Diverſity of Opinions in religious Matters. This Gentleman's firſt Argument then fails him, which proceeds upon this Suppoſition, that

* See to this purpoſe Rom. xii. 16. Phil. ii. 1, 2, 3. 1 Pet. iii. 8. † Epheſ. iv. 3. ‖ P. 75.

the Goſpel or the Chriſtian Faith lays Men under a neceſſity of *thinking all alike.*

It is true, there are ſome main Principles, a Belief of which ſeems to be required of all that would paſs for the Diſciples of *Jeſus.* But this is no Argument at all, that Chriſtianity is not founded on rational Conviction or Evidence. There are ſome Principles neceſſary to be believed in natural Religion, as well as reveal'd; and to require any Religion at all, is to require a Belief of ſome Principles, becauſe they lie at the Foundation of it.

But this will come in better, in conſidering the Author's next Argument; which is to this purpoſe:

That in the Goſpel *Queſtions are propounded to us under the Reſtraints of Threats and Authority.* And he thinks it abſurd and contradictory for a Man to be threatned into a rational Belief, *to be talk'd to of Danger in his Deciſions, to have the Rod held out with the Leſſon, and to have Propoſitions tendred to his Reaſon with Penalties annexed* *. This is what he ſeems to lay a particular ſtreſs upon. He frequently takes notice of the Command laid upon us to believe, and the Threatnings denounced againſt Unbelief, as a Proof that Chriſtianity is not a reaſonable Religion.

It is to be obſerved, that in all that he ſaith on this head in different Parts of his Pamphlet, he is pleaſed to conſider Faith and Unbelief as a mere ſpeculative Aſſent or Diſſent to certain Propoſitions, ſeparated from all moral Diſpoſitions and Qualifications whatſoever. Whereas any one that conſiders

* P. 8.

ſiders the Scripture with Attention, will find that this is not the Repreſentation there made of that Faith on which ſo great a ſtreſs is laid in the New Covenant; or of the Unbelief, againſt which ſuch Penalties are denounced. They are ſtill ſuppoſed to be of a practical Nature and Tendency, and to take in good or bad Diſpoſitions of the Mind, which are reckoned as included in the Faith there required, or the Unbelief there condemned.

But there is one previous Queſtion that deſerves to be diſtinctly conſidered, becauſe it ſeems to lie at the Foundation of the Author's whole Argument on this head; and that is, whether the believing any Principles whatſoever can in any caſe be required of any Man as a Duty? This is what he ſeems to deny. He will not allow that any Man can be obliged by any Authority whatſoever to aſſent to any Truth at all, that is propoſed to his Reaſon or Underſtanding. And that it would be the higheſt Tyranny and Injuſtice for God himſelf to require this, even with regard to thoſe Truths that are of the greateſt Certainty and Importance. That it *is impoſſible to conceive any the leaſt Connexion between the Notion of Duty, and aſſenting rationally to any Propoſition, however ſtrongly ſupported* *. This appears to me to be a ſtrange Aſſertion. It is in effect to ſay, that no Man can be oblig'd to it as a Duty, to make a right Uſe of the Reaſon God has given him, nor can God himſelf require him to do ſo. He cannot ſo much as require his reaſonable Creatures to believe and acknowledge his own ſupreme Dominion or Perfections, though founded

* P. 110.

founded on the cleareſt Reaſon and Evidence, nor conſequently to obey and worſhip him. For it is manifeſt, that if a Man may without blame deny a God and a Providence, he may without blame neglect to render that Obedience and Adoration that is due from reaſonable Creatures to the Supreme Being. Thus our Author has found out an admirable Expedient, by freeing Men from all Obligations to believe any Principles whatſoever, to free them from all Obligations to any Religion at all. Whereas, ſuppoſing God has given Men Faculties, by a right Uſe and Improvement of which they are capable of diſcerning Truth, eſpecially in Matters of great importance to their Conduct, and to their Happineſs; then it is both in itſelf fit, and is what God may juſtly require, that they ſhould make a juſt Uſe of their Reaſon and Underſtanding for diſcerning Truth. And if through a Neglect of uſing and improving their Reaſon in a proper manner, they do not diſcern or acknowledge thoſe Truths; then that Neglect or Abuſe of their Reaſon and Underſtanding is really a Fault, and God may puniſh it as ſuch.

What this Gentleman offers in ſupport of his Scheme, amounts to this, that our *Reaſon is ever neceſſitated to determine juſt as ſhe does of herſelf, and is by her nature incapable either of paying Compliments, or giving Offence.* That *the different Light things appear in to different Men, muſt neceſſarily create a different Senſe of things* *. And before this, he had obſerved, that the Determination we come to, is *a neceſſary and independent Event,*

* P. 8.

Event, under no Influence of ours †. Upon this Foundation he aſſerts, that *a Determination either right or wrong, in Matters that are not ſelf-evident*, or in which there is *the leaſt of Induction or Inference*, and ſuch are the moſt important Points of Religion, *muſt be in itſelf equally meritorious* ‡.

The whole Strength of his Reaſoning here depends upon this Suppoſition, that by the very Conſtitution of our Nature, and the Frame of the Human Underſtanding, we may be unavoidably neceſſitated to take Error for Truth, or Truth for Error, even in Matters of the higheſt importance; and that, without any fault of our own, after the beſt, the ſtricteſt and moſt impartial Enquiry and Examination, we are capable of making. But this is a Suppoſition that ought not to be admitted, becauſe it reſolves all our Errors into the Will and Conſtitution of God himſelf; whereas I think it is much more reaſonable and modeſt to ſuppoſe, that Men's Errors in Matters of great importance, are owing to themſelves, to ſome wrong Affections and Diſpoſitions of Mind, ſome Fault in their Enquiry. And their profeſſing the contrary, is no Proof at all; becauſe it cannot be expected, ſuppoſing it ever ſo much their own Fault, that they would be willing to own it to be ſo. But God, who ſearches their Hearts, may know it, and condemn them on the account of it. And where the Neglect of a good Practice follows upon a wrong Judgment flowing from faulty Cauſes, he may juſtly puniſh them both for that wrong Judgment, and for the evil Practice conſequent upon it.

For

† P. 5. ‡ P. 17, 18.

For my part, I cannot be brought to think, that Truth and Falſhood is ſo indifferent to the Human Underſtanding, that we are carried with equal Innocence to believe the one and the other, after the Evidence is fairly laid before us; and this with regard to Matters of great conſequence to our Duty and Happineſs. Since it cannot be denied, that there are ſome Truths of very great importance, that lie at the Foundation of all Religion, and of a good and virtuous Practice; it is as certain, that it is the Will of God, that his reaſonable Creatures ſhould know and believe thoſe Truths, as it is that he would have them practiſe the Duties that ariſe upon the Acknowledgment of thoſe Truths, and to which they are neceſſarily preſuppoſed, *e. g.* It is as certain that it is the Will of God, that Men ſhould believe there is a God that made and governs the World, and that there is a neceſſary Difference between moral Good and Evil, as that it is his Will that Men ſhould worſhip him, ſhould love and reverence him, ſhould ſubmit to his Authority, and obey his Laws, and ſhould practiſe Virtue, and abhor Vice. I cannot therefore think, that he hath ſo formed Men, and given them ſuch Faculties, that even making the beſt uſe of them, and without any fault at all, or wrong Diſpoſition on their parts, they may be invincibly ignorant of thoſe Truths, or may innocently diſbelieve or deny them. And as we may plainly ſee in numberleſs Inſtances, that Mens Affections and Appetites lead them wrong in their Actions, ſo I doubt not they frequently cauſe them to paſs wrong Judgments of things. And any one that knows any thing of Mankind,

Mankind, muſt be ſenſible that they are not determined by mere naked Evidence, but that ſome corrupt Affection, ſome wrong Byaſs of Appetite or Intereſt, which is really a Fault, in many inſtances corrupts and depraves their Judgment; and that this might be guarded againſt, if they uſed all the Care and Pains that is really and abſolutely in their power, and which the Importance of the thing deſerves and demands.

It is particularly certain, that with regard to Truths of a moral and religious Nature, our believing or not believing them, is often very much influenced by the good or bad Diſpoſitions of the Mind, and has a great Effect upon the Practice. And therefore believing in theſe Caſes may be an important Duty, and Unbelief may be very criminal. Nor can I ſee why God may not, as the ſupreme Legiſlator, interpoſe his Authority to require the one, and to warn Men againſt the other. This could not be properly called an arbitrary or unjuſt Proceeding, as this Writer repreſents it, or an erecting a Tyranny over the Underſtanding. To require Men to believe without Evidence, or without a Reaſon for believing, or to believe contrary to Reaſon and Evidence, is unjuſt; but for God to require his reaſonable Creatures to believe, when he himſelf knows there is ſufficient Evidence to engage them to believe, and that it will actually have that effect upon them, if it be not their own fault, and if they carefully attend to it with that Diſpoſition of Mind that becomes them, has nothing in it unjuſt or unbecoming him as the God of Truth, the wiſe and righteous Governor of the World.

For by requiring them to believe in that Caſe, he doth not require them to renounce or give up their Reaſon, or forbid them to make uſe of it; but he requires them to make a proper Uſe of their Reaſon, and of the Faculties he has given them, to lay their Minds open to Conviction and Evidence, and to endeavour to get them clear'd from the Influence of corrupt Inclinations, and culpable Prejudices.

I cannot therefore think, that this Part of the Author's Argument hath any thing in it to prove that Chriſtianity is not founded on Reaſon, or agreeable to it. If God ſhould in his infinite Goodneſs ſend a Meſſenger, or Meſſengers, to bring Doctrines and Laws of great importance to Mankind, as it may be juſtly expected that in ſuch a Caſe he would take care, that they ſhould be attended with ſufficient Atteſtations to convince the World that he ſent them; ſo it is very reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that he would require thoſe to whom this Revelation, with its Evidences, was made known, to believe and to obey it. For to what purpoſe would it be to give a Revelation, and to interpoſe in an extraordinary manner for confirming it with the moſt illuſtrious Atteſtations of a divine Authority; if, after all, it were left to Men as an indifferent matter, whether they believed or received it or not? And to deny that God himſelf has a right to require it as a Duty of Men, to believe and receive what he has revealed, and confirmed by ſuch Evidence, as he who knows the human Mind, knows to be ſufficient to convince honeſt and well-

diſpoſed

diſpoſed Minds, is a ſtrange Doctrine, and abhorrent from the common Senſe of Mankind.

Suppoſing Faith to be a Principle of holy Obedience, ſuch a Perſuaſion as forms the Soul to a ſincere Compliance with the Terms of the divine Covenant; and this it may be, and be at the ſame time a rational Perſuaſion; it is highly becoming God to encourage and to reward it. And ſuch is the Faith which the Goſpel requires, and on which it lays ſo great a ſtreſs. Again, ſuppoſing Unbelief brings with it a Diſobedience to the divine Laws, and diſqualifies a Man for the Practice of thoſe Duties which are of great importance in Religion, and without which we cannot, according to the divine Covenant, be entitled to the promiſed Benefits; and that this Unbelief is alſo owing to faulty Cauſes, to bad Diſpoſitions of Mind, and to the Influence of corrupt Paſſions or Intereſts, which pervert the Judgment, and hinder the Mind from a fair examining the Evidence; I think it cannot be denied, that ſuch an Unbelief would be very criminal. Now it is certain, that the Unbelief condemned in the Goſpel, is always ſuppoſed to be of this kind. It is repreſented as owing to bad Diſpoſitions, as the Source and Principle of it, and as attended with Diſobedience to the Laws of the Goſpel as the Fruit and Effect of it. And if God ſaw that this would be the general Caſe of thoſe that ſhould diſbelieve the Goſpel, this would be ſufficient to juſtify the general Threatnings and Declarations there made againſt Unbelievers. And if in any particular Inſtance Unbelief ſhould happen to

be owing to any invincible Impediment or Incapacity, the Supreme Lawgiver will know how to make proper Allowances; for he will always deal juſtly and equitably with all Men. But as the other is the common Caſe of Unbelievers, ſo it is proper the Declarations on that Head ſhould be general, and go upon that general Suppoſition. And if Unbelief be criminal, as upon ſuch a Suppoſition it would certainly be, it would deſerve Puniſhment; and if it deſerves Puniſhment, it is right to threaten it with the Puniſhment it deſerves. Nor would it be unbecoming a wiſe and juſt God to take this way to warn his reaſonable Creatures againſt it, and lay before them the evil Conſequences of ſuch a Conduct. This might be really a Kindneſs to them, as it would awaken their Attention to Truths and Duties of the higheſt conſequence to their Happineſs, and on which the Cauſe and Intereſts of Virtue do very much depend. And if this be an Influence upon their Minds, it is ſuch an Influence as God the Supreme Lawgiver has a right to exert over the human Mind, and which, Reaſon obliges us to own, would be highly proper in ſuch a Caſe.

The next thing this Gentleman offers to ſhew, that the Chriſtian Faith cannot be a rational thing, is, that *we are ordered to be baptized into it.* This he repreſents as *the known Original of Faith, the great Root whence all our religious Impreſſions notoriouſly ſpring*; and that by *the Baptiſmal Ceremony Men commence true Believers at once:* And this, even *whilſt they have not the leaſt Share or Symptom*

of

of Underſtanding *. He ſeems to lay a great ſtreſs upon this, and returns to it in ſeveral Parts of his Pamphlet †. And he obſerves, that *the Infant's Belief anſwers as effectually all the Demands of the Goſpel, as that of the firſt Proficient, and higheſt Graduate in Divinity* ‡.

The Strength of his Argument here depends upon the ſneering Account he gives of the Nature of Baptiſm. But there needs no more to ſhow the Weakneſs and Fallacy of it, than to ſtate the Caſe of Baptiſm according to the Goſpel-Notion of it; in which alone Chriſtianity is concerned. At the firſt founding of the Chriſtian Church, the firſt Work was to bring Perſons over to the Faith of the Goſpel, by ſetting before them the Evidence whereby it was confirmed; and then when they were once converted to the Faith, they were, according to the divine Appointment, to be baptized, which was a ſolemn taking upon them a Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion, and a bringing themſelves under the moſt ſacred Obligations to obey its Laws. And there is nothing in this but what is perfectly conſiſtent with Faith's being founded upon good and rational Evidence; nor can ſo much as a Shadow of an Argument be brought from it to prove, that becauſe Perſons were ordered to be baptized after they believed, therefore they did not, or could not uſe their Reaſon or intellectual Faculty to lead them into that Belief. Our Author is ſenſible of this, and therefore he lays the ſtreſs of his Argument upon the Baptiſm of Infants, which he repreſents in his

* P. 9. † P. 69. ‡ P. 114.

his own way. Let us therefore argue with him upon the Suppoſition, that it was the Will of God that not only adult Perſons, who themſelves embraced the Chriſtian Faith, but that their Children too ſhould be baptized. And I cannot ſee how it follows from this, that therefore Faith is not a rational thing. For as to adult Perſons, their being commanded to be baptized upon their believing does not in the leaſt prove that they did not embrace the Chriſtian Faith upon a rational Conviction. And as to Infants, they have no Faith at all; nor does their being baptized ſuppoſe they have any. All that it ſuppoſes, is not that they do themſelves believe, but that they are the Children of Believers; and are by that ſacred Rite entered into the viſible Society of Chriſtians, ſolemnly dedicated to God, and commended to his Grace and Bleſſing by ſuch as do themſelves believe; and who ſolemnly undertake to ſee that they be carefully inſtructed in the Principles of the Chriſtian Faith, when they come to Years capable of it, and that they be trained up to a holy and a virtuous Practice.

So among the *Jews*, no adult Perſon was allowed to be circumciſed, without profeſſing his Belief and Adherence to the Law of *Moſes*; and his being circumciſed, was to be regarded as an open Declaration of it. This was no proof at all, that he did not embrace that Law upon a rational Conviction, but rather ſuppoſed that he did ſo. But when he was himſelf circumciſed and openly profeſſed that Law, his Children, if he had any, were to be circumciſed too; which was not underſtood

ſtood as a Declaration that they alſo believed, of which they were not yet capable; but that they were dedicated to God as the Children of his profeſſed People, and to be trained as they grew up in the Belief and Acknowledgment of the living and true God, and the Practice of his Law.

And ſuppoſing it was the Will of God, that in like manner in the Chriſtian Church not only adult Perſons who themſelves believed, but the Children of ſuch ſhould be baptized, all that could be juſtly concluded from it would be, not that the Chriſtian Faith is not a reaſonable thing, but that the God of Truth and Purity well knew the Doctrines of Chriſtianity to be highly important, and agreeable to Truth and Reaſon; and therefore would have Children betimes inſtructed in thoſe Doctrines; and that he knew the Duties there preſcribed to be of great conſequence to our Happineſs, and therefore would have Children early trained up to the Knowledge and Practice of thoſe Duties. And this does not hinder, but rather obliges the Perſon who was thus early baptized, to conſider thoſe ſacred Truths when he grows up; and then he is not to believe them becauſe he was taught them in his Childhood, but becauſe he himſelf conſiders the Evidence brought for them, and finds it reaſonable and convincing; and in like manner, it does not hinder him from examining into the Nature and Importance of the Duties required of him, but rather obliges him to do ſo, that he may perform thoſe Duties from a full Conviction of their Reaſonableneſs and Excellency.

To

To his Queſtion therefore, *Can a Man be baptized into a rational Religion?* I anſwer, yes. A Man that is convinced of the Truth of ſuch a Religion, and believes it upon good Evidence, may be reaſonably baptized into it; *i. e.* he may ſolemnly, by that outward ſacred Rite, profeſs his Belief of that Religion, and oblige himſelf to the Duties it preſcribes; which is the deſign of Baptiſm with regard to the Adult. And with regard to Infants, it may be very reaſonable for a Man that himſelf believes it upon rational grounds, to baptize his Child, *i. e.* ſolemnly by that ſacred Rite to devote his Child to God, and to bring him as far as in him lies under Engagements to embrace and practiſe that excellent Religion, as ſoon as he is capable of doing ſo; at the ſame time ſolemnly obliging himſelf to take care that the Child be betimes ſeaſoned with the Knowledge of ſacred important Truth, and formed to the Practice of Piety and Virtue. And there is nothing improper, in ſuppoſing that it is the Will and Appointment of God, that Children ſhould betimes be brought under ſuch Engagements, when he knows them to be in themſelves fit and reaſonable, and of ſuch a nature that it will be their Duty and their great Advantage when they come to Years of Diſcretion perſonally to approve and to fulfil them. If this be laying Prejudices and Prepoſſeſſions in their way, it is prepoſſeſſing them in favour of Truth and Virtue; and it is every way agreeable to the divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, to lay them under ſuch a Prepoſſeſſion, and what the Author of our Beings has a right to do. And therefore his doing that, can never be

juſtly

juſtly brought as an Objection againſt the Reaſonableneſs of a Revelation.

THIS leads me to another Argument advanced by this Writer, to ſhew that Faith is not a reaſonable thing, and that is, becauſe we are ordered *to be taught it in our Childhood.* "If the Aſſent "God required were to be a rational one, it would "be highly wicked and unjuſt to prepoſſeſs Men's "tender Minds in any manner before they came to "the full Uſe of their rational Faculties. But now "that we are actually commanded with early Di"ligence to retain our Children as ſo many ſure "Votaries to the Cauſe we profeſs ourſelves; it is "plain that a rational Aſſent is by no means calcu"lated for, or expected at our hands *." He is ſo fond of this Thought, that he repeats it, as his manner is, in other Parts of his Book, where he obſerves, that ſuppoſing Faith rational, "The offi"cious Piety of what they call Education would "be highly partial and unjuſt, and would be no"thing elſe but the undue Cultivation of the moſt "notorious and palpable Prejudices; the antici"pating unfairly the Strength of the ſuppoſed E"vidence, *&c.* †"

I muſt own, this way of talking appears to me very extraordinary. That can never be a juſt Argument againſt the Reaſonableneſs of a divine Revelation, which it would be reaſonable to expect, ſuppoſing a Revelation really given. And of this kind is this Gentleman's Argument here. For, ſuppoſing a Revelation really given from Heaven, and that it is in itſelf agreeable to Reaſon, and of

* P. 11, 12. † P. 102, 103.

an excellent Tendency, then certainly the more reaſonable and excellent its Doctrines and Injunctions are, the more proper it would be, and the more for the Good of Mankind, that Children ſhould be inſtituted in it betimes, and trained up in a Knowledge of its divine Principles. For the Juſtneſs of this Conſequence, I appeal to the Experience and Obſervation of all Ages, and to the common Conſent of Mankind, and eſpecially of the wiſeſt and beſt of Men, who have ever agreed that it is a Matter of the greateſt Importance to take care to train up Children betimes in good Principles, and cultivate good Diſpoſitions in them. And if greater care was taken this way than there generally is, there is great reaſon to think that Mankind would be much more generally happy and virtuous than they are.

It is plain to any one that has made juſt Reflections on Human Nature, that the Author of our Beings deſigned that we ſhould be inſtructed in our Childhood. For we are ſo framed and conſtituted, that we muſt neceſſarily depend for the Beginnings of our Knowledge very much on thoſe that are about us. We are in a ſpecial manner caſt by God and Nature on the Care of our Parents. All will own, that they are obliged to take care of the Bodies of their Children; and muſt no care be taken to inſtruct and principle their nobler Part, their Minds? To cultivate the Seeds of Reaſon, and to form them to the Knowledge of ſacred Truth, and to a virtuous Practice? This is what Reaſon, the Good of Mankind, a Love to their Children, and a Deſire of their Happineſs, requires

of

of Parents; and the Neglect of it has been always regarded as a criminal thing. It may be ſaid, this is to prejudice and prepoſſeſs them; but it is a Prepoſſeſſion that Reaſon directs to: And to neglect this, under pretence of leaving them to their own unprejudiced Reaſon, would be to leave their Minds entirely rude and uncultivated, and give them up to Vice and Ignorance. This Gentleman pretends, that according to the Judgment of Reaſon, *it would be a wicked thing to prepoſſeſs their Minds in any manner, before they come to the full Uſe of their rational Faculties.* The plain Meaning of which I take to be this, that they muſt be left without all Inſtruction of any kind, till they arrive to the Age of Manhood. No Attempt muſt be made to inſtruct them in any Branch of Learning or Knowledge, or to put Books into their hands, becauſe Books and Inſtructions of Tutors or Maſters would probably prepoſſeſs them. Every Man muſt be left to find out the Whole of Religion and Knowledge for himſelf, by the mere dint of his own Reaſon and Induſtry. And what would be the conſequence of this, but univerſal Barbariſm? *Our Paſſions*, as this Gentleman obſerves, *are moſt prevalent in thoſe early Years, when Reaſon is leaſt able to form her Judgments in our Aſſiſtance.*—— *They muſt needs have got the ſtart in their Advances, before ſhe can by her Nature have made any conſiderable progreſs in thoſe ſalutary Principles, which are to regulate or ſubdue them. For want of timely Notice, we may more than probably have embarked in wrong Meaſures at ſetting out, and be loſt in the Power of Habit beyond Recovery, be-*

fore we know where we are. All this, and more to the ſame purpoſe, our Author produces *, to ſhew that Faith is neceſſary from the Beginning; from whence, by a ſtrange way of arguing, he infers, that it is not a rational thing, ſince it muſt anticipate the Exerciſe of our Reaſon. But all that it proves is this, that it is neceſſary to endeavour to inſtill ſuch Principles into the Minds of Children betimes, as may be of uſe to correct and regulate their Paſſions and Affections, before they can themſelves go thro' the tedious Proceſs of ſuch an Examination, as he ſuppoſes to be neceſſary to a rational Faith. But it does by no means follow, that becauſe it is proper to inſtruct Children betimes in the Principles of Faith and Religion, even before they are capable clearly of themſelves to diſcern the Evidence; therefore the Principles of Faith are not confirmed by good and rational Evidence, or that the Faith of the Children when they grow up, and can ſee the Evidence, may not become in the propereſt ſenſe rational.

Nor can it juſtly be pretended, that the Preposſeſſion of Education takes from a Child, when he comes to Maturity, the Uſe of his own Reaſon, and the Liberty of Judgment. It is ſtill in his power to examine into the Truth and Reaſonableneſs of what he was taught before. And ſurely this will ſcarcely be denied in the preſent Age, when it is become ſo faſhionable a thing to throw off the Principles of Education; and when there are ſo many Inſtances of Perſons, that inſtead of being prejudiced in favour of the Religion in which they

* P. 13, 14.

they were educated, ſeem rather to be prejudiced againſt it, and to be ready to diſcard it for that reaſon; and who, as this Author adviſes *, *explode under the name of Prejudice all the Effect of their Education.*

Another of his Arguments to prove that the Chriſtian Faith is not a rational one, is drawn from the Nature of Examination and Enquiry. The Strain of his Reaſoning is to this purpoſe; that Reaſon requires us to examine before we believe, whereas the Faith required in the Goſpel is abſolutely inconſiſtent with a fair Examination. He obſerves, that "there is not one ſingle Argument from "Reaſon, why a Man ſhould not return of courſe "to Neutrality, the firſt Moment he begins to "think for himſelf. That nothing is more evi-"dent, than that to examine fairly, we muſt "come unprejudiced and indifferent to the Exami-"nation. Examination in the very Term implies "a Suſpenſe of Conviction; and therefore if Reli-"gion admits at all of Examination, it muſt ne-"ceſſarily admit likewiſe of (at leaſt a temporary) "Diſbelief. The rational Chriſtian, whoever he "be, muſt of courſe have originally ſet out a Scep-"tick——and that a Man may, nay muſt, diſ-"believe a while for Information's ſake——." And yet all Doubting and Diſbelief is what the Goſpel condemns †. The Author had ſaid the ſame thing before ‖, and he returns to it in ſeveral Parts of his Pamphlet.

But the whole of his Reaſoning here proceeds upon a wrong Foundation, *viz.* that all Examination

* P. 9. † P. 12, 13. ‖ P. 5, 6.

tion neceſſarily ſuppoſes a perfect Neutrality or Indifferency of Mind, and a temporary Diſbelief. It is manifeſt, that in examining into the Truth of Facts, it is not neceſſary that we have an abſolute Doubt of thoſe Facts, or be perfectly neutral and indifferent about them, before we enter on a particular Examination. It is very uſual to examine into Facts that we were pretty ſure of in general before, and yet this may not hinder the Examination and Enquiry from being juſt and exact. And the ſame may alſo hold, with regard to Doctrines and Principles. It is not at all neceſſary to a fair Examination of Principles, that a Man be perfectly neutral and indifferent to them when he begins the Enquiry, or that he ſhould actually diſbelieve them. In many caſes this would be unreaſonable, in ſome ſcarce poſſible, except the Things he enquires or examines into are Things which he never heard of before. For if he enquires, *e. g.* into Doctrines or Principles in which he had been carefully educated and inſtructed, and when inſtructed had Reaſons given him, which appeared to him good and ſufficient; it would be abſurd to ſuppoſe that he ſhould not be influenced by thoſe Reaſons, till he ſaw cauſe to alter his Sentiments. For it would be as irrational to diſbelieve the Principles in which a Man was educated, for no other Reaſon, but becauſe he was educated in them; as it would be, to believe them merely for that Reaſon. When a Man has reaſon to believe a Thing, and no ſufficient Reaſon that he yet knows of to the contrary, it would be unreaſonable entirely to ſuſpend his Aſſent

Aſſent to it, merely becauſe it is poſſible to be falſe, tho' he has no reaſon to think it ſo.

A Man may enter upon an Enquiry with a Belief that what he enquires into is true, or at leaſt very probable, for the Reaſons which have been given him; but yet with a Reſolution to examine more cloſely, and ſearch more narrowly into the Validity of thoſe Reaſons and Evidences. And it is ſufficient to a fair Examination, that he applies himſelf to it with a Mind honeſtly prepared and diſpoſed to receive and ſubmit to whatever Evidence ſhall ariſe in the Courſe of the Examination or Enquiry. This is all the *Neutrality*, if this Gentleman will call it ſo, that is neceſſary to a fair Enquiry, *viz.* a Diſpoſition or Reſolution to embrace Truth, on which ſide ſoever it ſhall upon a careful Search appear; and this Neutrality may be where a Man at preſent thinks he has much more reaſon to believe, than the contrary. All the Doubt that is ſtrictly and abſolutely neceſſary to a fair Examination is, that it is poſſible what he enquires into may be otherwiſe than he at preſent apprehends it. But a Man may believe a thing poſſible to be falſe, and yet have great reaſon to believe it true. And it may well happen, that in the Courſe of his Examination, he may ſee ſtill greater Reaſon to believe and be aſſured of what he thought at firſt only probable. In which caſe, the Examination may be carried on very fairly, *i. e.* with a Mind open to Conviction and Evidence, without entertaining any conſiderable Doubt, or ever once ſeeing cauſe abſolutely to ſuſpend the Aſſent concerning it. Thus, *e. g.* if a Man has been carefully educated

cated in the Belief of a God, and of a Providence, and the moral Differences of Things, and at the ſame time has been inſtructed in the Reaſons upon which theſe Principles are founded, it is not neceſſary to a fair Examination into thoſe Principles, that he ſhould be perfectly indifferent with regard to them, or ſhould diſbelieve them; he may very conſiſtently carry on an Examination and Enquiry, without having his Belief of them ſhocked either in the Beginning or whole Progreſs of it, becauſe as he goes on in the Examination, the Evidence may riſe fuller to his view, and his Convictions may grow ſtronger. And I doubt not this hath alſo been the caſe of many excellent Perſons of great Abilities and Probity, and of free Judgments, who have examined the Evidences for Chriſtianity. They have come to the Examination with a good Opinion of it at firſt, but yet with a Reſolution impartially to conſider and follow the Evidence that ſhould ariſe; and the more they examined, the more they found reaſon to believe it; and therefore were never obliged during their Examination abſolutely to ſuſpend their Aſſent to it, or to refuſe to govern their Practice by its Precepts.

There is no need therefore to ſuppoſe with this Writer, that all the Time of Examination and Enquiry muſt be an *infidel Interim*, as he calls it*, or to talk of the Danger of Death's coming upon us whilſt we are carrying on this Enquiry, and of our lacking Faith the *neceſſary Paſſport*, &c. For a Perſon may fairly carry on the Enquiry, and yet neither during all that time diſbelieve the Principles,

* P. 17.

ciples, nor neglect the Practice of the Duties of Chriſtianity; yea, may ſtill have his Faith more ſtrengthned as he goes on, and his Reſolutions more eſtabliſhed for a Chriſtian Practice.

We may ſee by this, how juſt this Gentleman's Inſinuations are, as if all Enquiries and *Diſquiſitions into the Truth and Authentickneſs of Revelation were Practices utterly inconſiſtent with the Pretenſions of ſuch as call themſelves Chriſtians, or expect any Benefit from the Goſpel-Covenant, to which they are always preſumed Parties* *. For ſuppoſing God hath given us a Revelation, which he knows is attended with ſufficient Evidence to ſatisfy a reaſonable and well-diſpoſed Mind, he may very conſiſtently require us both to examine and to believe it; becauſe he knows a firm Belief of it will be the Effect of a fair Examination, if it be not our own faults. His Deſign may be in effect this: Examine fairly and carefully, and you will ſee ſuch Evidences of its Truth and Excellency, as will make your Belief and Obedience a reaſonable Service.

Nor can I ſee but a Parent who takes great care and pains in training up his Child to juſt and worthy Sentiments of Religion and Virtue, may very conſiſtently bid him examine and enquire when he grows up, without deſiring him to diſbelieve what he has taught him. There would be nothing abſurd in his addreſſing him thus: I have endeavoured to inſtruct you in the Reaſonableneſs of the Principles of Religion, as far as I was able to do it; and now you are come to a Capa-

* P. 16.

city of judging for yourſelf, I recommend it to you, to examine thoſe things, and the Reaſons and Evidences on which they are founded, with a Mind open to Evidence and a Love of Truth; and am perſuaded that the more you do ſo, the more you will be convinced of their Reaſonableneſs and Excellency. This is a way of recommending Enquiry and Examination perfectly conſiſtent with a firm Belief of the Truth of the Things enquir'd into; nor is there any thing unreaſonable in ſuch a Proceeding.

Having conſidered this Gentleman's Account of the Nature of Examination and Enquiry, it will be no hard matter to ſhew the Weakneſs and Fallacy of the Argument he builds upon it. He firſt ſuppoſes, that *a Man may, nay muſt, diſbelieve a while for Information's ſake*, and then aſks, *Why may he not even diſbelieve for ever, for want of Information? And if Doubting be once allowable, who ſhall aſcertain the preciſe time for ſumming up the Evidence, and pronouncing Sentence?* He ſuppoſes that, according to the *Scheme* of thoſe that are for a rational Faith, *the firſt Motions of Doubt are neceſſary Preparations, and therefore not in themſelves criminal.* And then he aſks, *By what Authority (if the Evidence happens never to take effect) can a Man be obliged ever to be reſolved* ?* I ſee no other Tendency in this way of talking, but to promote univerſal Scepticiſm. But the Foundation of it has been ſhewn to be wrong, *viz.* that Examination in all Caſes neceſſarily ſuppoſes a previous Diſbelief. But if we ſhould grant it to be ſo, it does

* P. 13.

does not follow, that if a Man be allowed to doubt or diſbelieve for a while, therefore he may be allowed to doubt or diſbelieve for ever; and that if Doubting in ſome Caſes may be innocent, *i. e.* before the Evidence is laid before him, therefore it may be alſo innocent after the Evidence is fully propoſed to him. I think it cannot reaſonably be denied, that Doubting in many Caſes may be a Diſtemper of Mind, owing to very faulty Cauſes; and when once a Man's Doubting is become criminal, he is under a real Obligation to lay it aſide, and to rectify it, and may be required to do ſo, at leaſt by a divine Authority. When Evidences have been propoſed ſufficient to remove his Doubts, and his being ſtill in doubt is owing to a bad Temper of Mind, to a faulty Affectation, to an Unwillingneſs to be convinced, and to ſubmit to Evidence, which may often happen with regard to religious Truth; in that caſe, his perſiſting in his Doubt is really vicious and unreaſonable; and all the time he perſiſts in it, he is chargeable with a Crime, and accountable for his Conduct to the Supreme Judge, who knows the ſecret Diſpoſition of his Mind, and may juſtly condemn him for it.

In *Pag.* 16, 17. our Author, by a high-flown Encomium on Faith, its great Neceſſity and Importance, endeavours to deſtroy its Reaſonableneſs. He had repreſented, in ſtrong Colours, the early Influence of Prejudices and Paſſions, to ſhew that Reaſon *comes too late* to our aſſiſtance, and is too ſlow in her Advances; whereas Faith is neceſſary to guide us from the beginning of our Lives. And then he goes on to obſerve, that Faith is *neceſſary to*

ſtamp a Value on Morality, which, without it, is of no eſteem or acceptance with God: That it is the neceſſary *Paſſport*, without which we cannot die ſafely. But what his Deſign is, in all this fine Harangue on the Neceſſity of Faith, he lets us know, when he aſks, " Is it now any unwarrant-" able Concluſion from all theſe Conſiderations, to " infer, that Religion therefore *can never be a* " *thing to be taught*, that it muſt needs be ſome-" thing that *doth not require* Time to attain, like " other common Leſſons and Sciences, which are " indifferent in their Conſequences? Since the very " ſame Reaſons that make it neceſſary at all, make " it equally ſo every moment of our Lives."

The Maxim here advanced by this Gentleman, that Religion or Faith *can never be a thing to be taught*, and that it is ſomething which doth *not require Time to attain*, is a very convenient one for him, and would no doubt anſwer his Intention very well. For if Religion cannot be taught, it is certain the Intellectual Faculty is not deſigned to lead Men into it. And it would follow, that neither Parents ſhould inſtruct their Children in the Principles of Religion, nor ſhould any Perſons be employed as publick Teachers; nor is there any need of the Scriptures, or of any Books at all for our Inſtruction; nor ſhould any Man uſe means to underſtand Religion himſelf, or teach it to others.

The Method he takes to prove, that Faith or Religion can never be taught, and that it requires no time to attain, is pretty extraordinary. It is what he infers from the Account he had given of the Neceſſity of Faith. And he obſerves, that *the very*

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ſame Reaſons that make it neceſſary at all, make it equally ſo every Moment of our Lives; that is, from the time of our Birth to our Death, and conſequently equally neceſſary to Infants as to adult Perſons, neceſſary before we have any uſe of our Reaſon, or are capable of being taught at all.

But this is a ſtrange way of repreſenting things. Let us grant all he can deſire about the Neceſſity of Faith to our Acceptance with God, and to our Salvation, yet ſtill it is neceſſary only in thoſe that are the capable Subjects of it. The neceſſity of holy Obedience, and of good Works, or keeping the Commandments of God, is as ſtrongly inſiſted upon in the ſacred Writings, as that of Faith. But Common Senſe teaches every Man to limit this, and the Nature of the thing limits it, that it muſt relate only to Perſons that are capable of moral Agency; and therefore not to Ideots, nor Infants before they come to the Uſe of their Reaſon. And the ſame thing may be ſaid with regard to the Declarations made concerning the Neceſſity of Faith. They are to be underſtood as relating only to thoſe that are naturally capable of it. Allowing Faith to be never ſo neceſſary, the Meaning is not, either that an equal Degree of Faith is neceſſary to all the Adult, how different ſoever their Advantages or Opportunities may be; or that it is at all neceſſary, in any degree, to be actually in Infants, before they have any uſe of Reaſon, or are capable of *knowing good and evil.*

One thing he urgeth, to ſhew the abſolute Neceſſity of Faith at all times, is, that it is neceſſary *to ſtamp a Value on Morality.* This is not true in the

the Extent in which he repreſents it, that without it the *beſt of Lives*, and *the moſt virtuous Actions*, are *highly criminal and diſpleaſing to God*; tho' he endeavours to prove this, according to his manner, by ſome miſapplied Texts of Scripture, which I ſhall not now turn aſide to examine. But allowing it to be ſo, it will not follow, that Faith is neceſſary before we are capable of moral Agency. It is ſome time before Children are capable of Actions properly moral, and for which they are accountable as moral Agents, becauſe it is ſome time before they are properly capable of exerciſing their Reaſon; in like manner, it is ſome time before they are in any degree capable of Faith. And by the time they are capable of Actions properly moral or religious, they are capable of believing too, as far as it is neceſſary for them to believe. So that Faith, and a good moral or religious Practice, may go together, from the time of their beginning to think and act rationally. And this, inſtead of proving that Faith or Religion cannot be taught, only ſhews the great neceſſity of teaching it betimes. And as their Reaſon or intellectual Faculty is for ſome time very imperfect, ſo their Faith is very imperfect too, and is capable of continual Increaſe and Improvement, as their Reaſon and Underſtanding improves. As Children begin very early to uſe their Reaſon, tho' in a very imperfect manner, ſo it is highly fit to begin to inſtruct them early in the Principles of Religion; and this may be fairly concluded from what our Author repreſents in ſo lively a manner, concerning the danger we are in betimes from the Snares of the World,

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and from irregular Appetites and Paſſions, which ſoon begin to operate and exert a great influence upon us *. It is therefore a great advantage to any Perſon, to be *from a Child acquainted with the Holy Scriptures*, as *Timothy* was. And it is a great Inſtance of the divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, that God hath provided a Revelation for us, by inſtructing us in which, we may have our Minds early ſeaſoned with the moſt excellent Principles, and the moſt powerful Motives to engage us to a good and virtuous Practice. And Children may be gradually let into the Excellency of thoſe Doctrines and Laws, and the Evidences whereby they are confirmed, in a way accommodated to their Capacities. They may be taught what they are to believe, together with the Reaſons why they are to believe, as far as they are capable of receiving them, which undoubtedly will at firſt be in a very imperfect way. But yet it is ſuch a degree of Faith as is ſuited to their Age; a Faith ſufficient to influence their Practice, as far as Practice morally good and religious is required of them.

I had almoſt forgot an extraordinary Argument produced by this Writer, to ſhew that the Faith required of us, is not a rational Faith; and that is, that we are required to *pray for the Increaſe of our Faith*. From whence he thinks it follows, that it is *not expected that we ſhould contribute to its Eſtabliſhment by any Pains or Endeavours of our own* †. His Argument here proceeds upon the Suppoſition, that Prayer to God ſuperſedes the Uſe of all Means or Endeavours on our parts, and that we

* P. 14. † P. 10, 11.

we are never to pray to God for any thing, in which we are to contribute our own Endeavours; which is to ſay, that we are never to pray to God, either for a Bleſſing on our worldly Affairs, or to aſſiſt us in the Practice of Piety and Virtue: for it is evident, that in both theſe caſes we are obliged to uſe our own Endeavours. But it appears to me, to be the moſt conſiſtent thing in the world, ſuppoſing a God and a Providence, to uſe our own beſt Endeavours, and to apply to God for his Aſſiſtance and Bleſſing upon our Endeavours. And particularly, as it is our duty to make the beſt uſe we can of the Underſtanding and Faculties God hath given us, in enquiring after Truth; ſo Reaſon directs us, and it is what the beſt and wiſeſt of Men in all Ages have been ſenſible of, to apply to the Supreme Being, *the Father of Lights*, and the *God of Truth*, to aſſiſt us in our Enquiries, to open and enlighten our Minds to a clearer Diſcernment of the Truth, and to diſpoſe our Hearts for receiving it in the Love of it.

But he thinks it impoſſible, that *Grace can ever ſecond or add to the Faith that is founded in Reaſon.* The Reaſon he gives, is, becauſe *Increaſe of Evidence is the only Acceſſion to be made to rational Perſuaſion.* Allow this, then whatever increaſes the Evidence, or ſets it in a ſtronger light, or enables the Mind better to diſcern it, may make an Acceſſion to a rational Perſuaſion. Now I think it cannot be denied, that the Father of our Spirits can, by his gracious Influence upon the Mind, enable it more clearly to diſcern the Evidence, can ſet it in a ſtronger light, and help to diſpel vicious Prejudices;

Prejudices; and on ſuch a Suppoſition his Grace would increaſe our Faith in a way agreeable to Reaſon. And if ſo, there is no Inconſiſtency in humbly applying to God for that purpoſe, at the ſame time that we uſe our own diligent Endeavours. And it may well be thought that a wiſe and good God, the Lover of Truth and Virtue, will be ready to aſſiſt good and well-diſpoſed Minds, that are willing to embrace Truth and ſubmit to Evidence; and who, at the ſame time that they uſe their own Endeavours in the beſt manner they are able, are ſenſible of their Dependence upon him, and humbly apply to him for Light and Aſſiſtance in a Matter of ſuch Importance. And on the other hand, God may juſtly withhold his Aſſiſtance from thoſe who from a vain and arrogant Conceit of themſelves, one of the worſt Diſpoſitions for finding out Truth, do not apply to God for Light and Aſſiſtance, and perhaps ridicule his interpoſing in ſuch matters.

This may help us to judge of what the Author further offers *, where he repreſents the applying to God by Prayer for the *confirming and continuing us ſtedfaſt in the Faith*, to be a *diſavowing in the Fulneſs of our Conviction all future Uſe of Reaſon for our Security*. And he talks to the ſame purpoſe again †. But the reſolving to make a future Uſe of our Reaſon is very conſiſtent with our praying to God to confirm and continue us ſtedfaſt in the Faith. For here, as in the former Caſe, our Prayer ſtill ſuppoſes the Uſe of Means on our parts. We muſt take all proper Methods to know more

* P. 11. † P. 27.

and more of Religion, and to get a clearer view of the Evidence whereby it is confirmed, and to act under the governing Influence of it in the Practice of Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs; at the ſame time earneſtly begging of God that he would continue his divine Aſſiſtances, and enlighten our Minds more and more in the Knowledge of ſacred Truth; that he would cauſe us to ſee more of its Reaſonableneſs and Excellency, and feel more of its happy Influence on our Temper and Conduct. In which caſe our Stedfaſtneſs in the Faith would not be, what this Gentleman is here pleaſed to repreſent the Chriſtian *Perſeverance* to be, *a blind and fooliſh Obſtinacy to a preſent Notion*; but a ſteady Adherence to what we are perſuaded of upon good and ſolid grounds, ſo as not to be drawn aſide by any wrong Motives or artful Repreſentations, or thro' a Levity and Inſtability of Mind, from important Truth and Duty. And there is nothing in ſuch an Application to the Deity, but what would become any good and thinking Man, ſuppoſing Religion to be founded in Reaſon.

From *p.* 17. to *p.* 21. the Strain of his arguing ſeems to be this:——That if Faith were a rational Thing, the Generality of Mankind could not be juſtly required to believe, becauſe this would be a thing abſolutely above their Capacity. He ſets himſelf to ſhew, that there are few that are *capable of reaſoning at all.* And he particularly obſerves, that *the Nature and Evidence of Religion in the rational way is founded entirely on the Credit and Authentickneſs of Hiſtory, in which it is impoſſible to give any rational Deciſion without a*

good

good natural Turn for Reaſoning, and even ſome very conſiderable Acquiſitions in Learning. And then he inſiſts upon a *Diſtinction*, which he thinks *is not ſufficiently attended to on this Subject*, viz. That *it is one thing whether a Propoſition be true in itſelf, and another whether a Man be bound to apprehend or believe it.* That therefore let Chriſtianity and the Evidence for the *Hiſtorical Facts of the Goſpel* be ſuppoſed to be never *ſo true in itſelf, and convincing to thoſe that have capacity to look into it*; yet the Generality of Mankind cannot *be bound* to believe it, becauſe they have not *Capacity* to diſcern the Force of the Proofs brought for it. It is a thing of which they can *have no perception*, nor can they frame any reaſonable Notion about it; any more than a Man that has no *Ear* can perceive or judge of Muſick, tho' *never ſo fine or juſt.*

It will eaſily be allowed, that a thing may be true, and yet all Men may not be bound to believe it; and that no Man can be obliged to believe a thing on rational grounds, when he is naturally incapable of perceiving or underſtanding the Evidence brought for it. But I differ very widely from this Gentleman in the Suppoſition he makes, that the Evidence for Chriſtianity is abſolutely above the natural Capacity of the Generality of Mankind.

Indeed, according to his Repreſentation, it is above their Capacity to know or believe any Religion at all. Man, according to his Account of him, inſtead of being formed a religious Creature, is naturally incapable of Religion, and therefore

ſhould not give himſelf any concern about it. He here repreſents it, as if it would be the moſt unjuſt and tyrannical thing in God to require Men to believe any thing that *is not ſelf-evident*, and in which there is the *leaſt of Induction or Inference*; and conſequently to require them to believe even the fundamental Principles of natural Religion, the Being of a God and a Providence: for it cannot be ſaid, that theſe are properly *ſelf-evident*; they are capable of being proved by *Induction* and *Inference*. Thus, in order to ſhew that Men are not capable of a rational Faith, he degrades the Generality of Mankind almoſt to a level with the Brutes in point of Underſtanding. He repreſents them as not *qualified for reaſoning at all*; as incapable of any thing that has *the leaſt of Induction or Inference* in it; that *their Souls are lodged in their hands*, as he politely expreſſeth it, *and their Apprehenſions extend not beyond a ſimple Propoſition, and they are thrown out at once at the very firſt mention of introducing a Medium*. But common Obſervation and Experience may convince any Man, that this is a very falſe and injurious Repreſentation of human Nature. We plainly ſee, that the Generality of Men in their common Affairs and Converſation daily uſe Mediums, and make Inductions and Inferences. And there are few, that when they are tried, and apply themſelves to it, are not capable of learning Things that depend upon Mediums, and which require an Exerciſe of the reaſoning Faculty. And I doubt not, God, who deſigned Men for Religion, has formed them ſo, that the Generality of Mankind

are

are capable of underſtanding the main Principles of it, as far as is ſufficient for them, if they will really take that pains and care which becomes them in Matters of ſuch Importance, and will uſe their Reaſon and the Faculties God has given them, as much as it is really in their power to do, and as they actually do in Things of far leſs conſequence.

I acknowledge indeed, that it would not be very conſiſtent with the State and Circumſtances of the Generality of Mankind, to enter into a minute Diſcuſſion in a way of Reaſoning into the ſeveral Doctrines and Principles of Religion, and regularly trace them by the force of their own Reflections thro' their genuine Connexions and Conſequences. And this ſhews the great Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God in the Method he has taken for the Inſtruction of Mankind, by comprizing all that is neceſſary and proper for us to believe and know, relating to Religion, in a written ſtanding Revelation, which ſets before us the main Articles of Truth and Duty in plain Propoſitions, which they may without much difficulty underſtand. And the Evidence that is brought to prove that this is a Revelation from God, and that the Perſons who publiſhed it to the World in his Name were extraordinarily ſent and commiſſion'd by him, is ſuch as is reaſonably ſufficient to convince any Man of common Underſtanding, that will apply himſelf cloſely to conſider it. Nor is it neceſſary to a rational Belief, to enter into a particular Examination of every Difficulty and every Objection. A Man may firmly and upon good and ſolid grounds

believe

believe a God and a Providence, without knowing the ſeveral atheiſtical Schemes that have been advanced, or ſo much as any one of them; yea, and tho' he may meet with ſome Difficulties, that he is not well able to ſolve. So in revealed Religion, a Man may ſee ſo much reaſon to be perſuaded of the Truth of the extraordinary Facts by which it was atteſted, and he may have ſuch a ſtrong Senſe and Diſcernment of its excellent Nature and beneficial Tendency, and the divine Characters of Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Purity, that are diſcernible in it, as may render his Belief rational, and lay a Foundation for a holy Practice, tho' he does not know, or is not well able to ſolve all the Difficulties and Objections that a ſubtil Wit may raiſe againſt it.

And if there be any particular Perſons of ſuch weak Intellects or ſmall Opportunities, that they are incapable of forming a juſt Notion of the main Principles of that Revelation, and the Proofs and Evidences on which it is founded, in which caſe we may be ſure a merciful God will make all proper Allowances for their Weakneſs; this does not prove that Revelation to be uſeleſs, or not to be founded on good and rational Evidence. For, ſuppoſing God gives a Revelation at all, it is ſufficient to juſtify its Reaſonableneſs and Uſefulneſs, if it be ſuch that the Generality of Mankind of common Senſe and ordinary Underſtanding or Capacity, by applying to it with the Care and Attention that becomes them in ſuch a caſe, may ſufficiently underſtand it and comprehend the Force of its Proofs, ſo far as to make it reaſonable for them

to

to receive it with a Faith that may influence their Practice, and have a happy Tendency to purify their Hearts and reform their Lives. And if ſome of its Proofs be ſuch, that they could not have found them out of themſelves, it is ſufficient that they can comprehend them when laid before them by others. It is plain to any one that conſiders the State of Mankind, that we ſtand in need of mutual Aſſiſtance and Information in many Caſes of great conſequence. And it is every Man's Duty in ſuch a caſe, to uſe Means to get the beſt Aſſiſtance and Information he can, and then to judge upon the whole by the Reaſon and Underſtanding which God hath given him. And I am perſuaded, that a moderate Share of that Care and Pains that is taken in other Things, would ordinarily ſerve to give Men ſuch a Notion of Religion and its Proofs, as may make it reaſonable for them to yield an Aſſent to it, and to govern their Practice by it. And this has actually been the caſe of many that have not had more Capacity or Leiſure than others, that thro' a faulty Negligence of Mind, or the Influence of corrupt Luſts and evil Habits, have lived in an ignorance of it.

As to what this Gentleman alledges, concerning the Incapacity of the Vulgar to judge of the hiſtorical Evidence of Religion, I think it may be juſtly affirmed, that hiſtorical Evidence is a kind of Proof as obvious to common Underſtandings as any that can be offered; far more eaſily comprehended, and which they can more eaſily judge of than they could underſtand or judge of metaphyſical abſtracted Reaſonings; and which may be ſo circumſtanced,

that

that a Man of an ordinary Capacity may perceive the Force of it, and may ſee it reaſonable for him to receive Things upon that Evidence. It cannot be denied, that with regard to many Events that happened many Ages ago, tho' the original Hiſtories that give an account of thoſe things are in the learned Languages; yet one that has not Learning himſelf may have ſuch a moral Certainty concerning them from the Conſent of thoſe that do underſtand thoſe original Hiſtories, or from the Hiſtories themſelves tranſlated into his own Tongue, that he may ſee plainly, that it would be perfectly unreaſonable to doubt of the Truth of thoſe Facts. Any Man of common Underſtanding may obſerve, that by the Acknowledgment of all Mankind, it is very reaſonable to believe Facts that were done in paſt Ages, when the Accounts of them are tranſmitted to us in credible authentick Records. And thoſe Records are juſtly accounted authentick, that were written by Perſons who were well acquainted with the Facts they relate, and who at the ſame time appear to have been Perſons of great Probity and Sincerity. And it gives great force to this, if the Facts themſelves were of a publick nature, and eſpecially if thoſe Facts produced great and ſurprizing Changes in the World; but above all, if the Effects of them have continued even to the preſent Age. And it is no ſmall Confirmation of all this, if it appears that thoſe Records can be traced from this preſent Age, up to the very Age in which they were firſt written; *i. e.* the Age in which the Facts were ſaid to be done, and ſtill found to have been in being, and referred to in many Writings ſtill extant.

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There is nothing in all this, but what may appear to carry great Reaſon and Evidence in it, to any Man of common ſound Underſtanding. And it is eaſy to apply this to the Facts upon which the Chriſtian Religion is founded.

The Accounts of theſe Facts are tranſmitted to us in the beſt and propereſt way, in which paſt Facts could be tranſmitted; that is, in Records written by Perſons who profeſs to have been Witneſſes to them, and who appear to have been perfectly well-acquainted with the Facts they relate. And an honeſt, tho' unlearned Man, may, by conſulting thoſe Records, without entering into any nice hiſtorical Diſquiſitions, find great reaſon to believe, that the Accounts there given of thoſe extraordinary Facts are true, and to be depended on. Upon an attentive conſidering them, he finds all the Characters of Sincerity, and an impartial Regard to Truth, that can be deſired in ſuch Writings: He finds enough to convince him, that the Writers of them were excellent Perſons, of great Probity and Simplicity, and who appear to have had no worldly Intereſts in view, nothing but the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind, and whoſe whole Character and Conduct ſeems to have been the moſt remote from that of Impoſtors, that can be imagined. And this furniſhes a good Argument, to convince his Reaſon, that ſuch excellent Perſons could never be guilty of ſuch a ſolemn Impoſture, ſuch deliberate Villainy, as to have contrived ſuch a Series of extraordinary Facts and miraculous Atteſtations, and to have endeavoured to impoſe them upon the World in the Name of God,

even if it had been in their power to have done ſo. And there is no reaſon to think they could have done it, if they had been ever ſo willing, conſidering the Circumſtances they were in, the Power and Malice of their Enemies, and the Nature of the Facts themſelves; many of which were ſuch, that it would have been the eaſieſt thing in the world to have detected and expoſed them, if they had not been true.

It greatly ſtrengthens this, when he conſiders the Nature of the Religion that is taught in thoſe Writings, and which is cloſely connected with the Facts there related. He plainly finds, that in that Religion, as laid down in thoſe Writings, there are not the leaſt Marks of worldly Ambition, Avarice, or Senſuality, nor any thing to flatter the corrupt Appetites and Inclinations of Men; that there is an uniform Spirit of Piety, Zeal, and Charity, running through the whole; that its Doctrines and Precepts are unqueſtionably pure and holy, and of the moſt excellent Tendency; that the Practice of Righteouſneſs and Virtue is there carried to the nobleſt height, and inforced by the moſt important Motives; that it ſtrongly condemns all Falſhood and Impurity, and denounces the Wrath of God againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of Men. In a word, that the governing End of all ſeems to be the Glory of God, the Good of Mankind, and the promoting the Cauſe of Truth and Holineſs in the World. This furniſhes an obvious Argument, of great force and ſtrength to convince him, that ſuch a Religion, with the Facts on which it is founded, and which it neceſſarily ſuppoſes, and

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every where refers to, was not the Contrivance of Impoſtors and Seducers. Men of ſuch a Character would never have taken ſuch pains to eſtabliſh ſuch a Religion as this, and that in oppoſition to all their worldly Intereſts, and when they thereby expoſed themſelves to the greateſt Sufferings, under which they had nothing to ſupport them, but the Hopes of a Reward in another World, which, according to that Religion, if guilty of ſuch deliberate Falſhood and Impoſture, they could not expect.

Theſe are very natural and obvious Reflections, the Force of which may be made to appear to any Man of common Underſtanding, and which without entering into any great Refinements, or tedious Diſquiſitions, may be of great weight to convince him, that the Writings which contain the original Records of Chriſtianity, and the Facts by which it was atteſted, are to be depended upon.

But beſides this, if he purſues his Enquiries, he may eaſily find, that there are ſome general Facts relating to thoſe Matters, which are univerſally acknowledged, and which no Man was ever ſo abſurd as to deny. That there were ſuch Perſons as Jeſus Chriſt and his Apoſtles, can no more reaſonably be doubted than that there are Chriſtians now in the World. And that Chriſt declared himſelf to be an extraordinary Perſon ſent of God, that he profeſſed to do many wonderful Works, and to inſtruct Mankind in Religion, and that he was crucified, is what the Heathens and Jews, the moſt virulent Enemies of Chriſtianity, never pretended to deny.

And that his Apoſtles went abroad through the Nations after his Death, and publiſhed to the World that he was riſen from the dead, and aſcended up into Heaven, of which they declared themſelves to have been Eye-witneſſes; and that they profeſſed to deliver the Religion they received from him, and pretended to work Miracles in his Name, is capable of as good Proof as that there were ſuch Perſons as the Apoſtles: Nor do the greateſt Enemies of Chriſtianity attempt to conteſt this. And it is alſo a Fact that cannot, with any ſhadow of Reaſon, be conteſted; and which is capable of the cleareſt Proof even from the Teſtimony of Heathen Writers now extant, and ſome of which are tranſlated into our own Tongue *, that great Numbers of Perſons in that very Age became Chriſtians, *i. e.* received that Jeſus who had been ignominiouſly crucified by the *Romans* and *Jews*, as their Saviour and their Lord: And that the Religion founded by him and his Apoſtles, though contrary to the moſt favourite Prejudices and Paſſions both of Jews and Gentiles, prevailed and ſpread in a ſhort time to a wonderful degree, though it had the greateſt Oppoſition made to it, and no worldly Advantages to recommend it. Theſe are Facts which are ſo clear and certain, that a Man may as reaſonably doubt of all paſt Facts whatſoever as doubt of them. And upon conſidering theſe things, it is natural to reflect, that there muſt have been ſomething very extraordinary in the Evidence, that could induce ſuch Numbers of Perſons,

* Particularly *Suetonius*, in the Life of *Nero*; *Tacitus*, in the Fifteenth Book of his *Annals*; and *Pliny*, in the Tenth Book of his *Epiſtles*, Epiſt. 97.

ſons, at a time when they had the beſt Opportunities of knowing the Truth of thoſe things, to embrace the Faith of a crucified Jeſus, in oppoſition to their darling Prejudices and worldly Intereſts. And this again makes the Account credible, that is given in thoſe original Records, of the Evidence whereby Perſons were brought to believe in Jeſus, and to embrace his Religion; an Evidence ariſing from a Series of ſuch extraordinary and illuſtrious Atteſtations, as demonſtrated Jeſus, who was crucified, to be ſent of God, and the Religion publiſhed by him and his Apoſtles, to be divine. On ſuch a View of things, the wonderful Progreſs of that Religion in ſuch Circumſtances, and the Zeal and Conſtancy of its firſt Profeſſors and Adherents, may be well accounted for, which otherwiſe could hardly be done. And this, added to the Reflections juſt mentioned, ariſing from the Character of the Writings themſelves, and the Nature of the Religion there contained, helps to ſet the Truth of the main Facts, on which that Religion was founded, in a yet ſtronger light.

It is no ſmall Confirmation of all this, that it can be proved with great Evidence, enough to ſatisfy any reaſonable Mind, that theſe Writings that contain the original Records of Chriſtianity, have been and are ſtill extant, and their Authority has been acknowledged from the Time in which Chriſtianity was firſt founded, to the preſent Age. Never were there Writings that were diſperſed into ſo many hands, or that were ſo frequently appealed to by Men of different Sects and Parties, on ſo many different Occaſions. Not one Age hath paſſed from

from the time in which they were written to the preſent, in which thoſe Writings have not been referred to, and many Paſſages, and often large Portions, cited out of them. This is a matter, of which an unlearned Man may have ſuch an Aſſurance, by the concurring Teſtimony of thoſe that have Opportunities of examining thoſe things, however widely differing in their Sentiments in other matters, as well as by large Portions of original Writings tranſlated into his own Tongue, that he cannot reaſonably doubt of it. Eſpecially when he finds, that thoſe who ſeem willing to lay hold of all Advantages againſt Chriſtianity, are not able to invalidate this Evidence; but inſtead of anſwering the diſtinct Proofs that have been brought, have recourſe to general Clamours and Invectives againſt hiſtorical Evidence and moral Certainty, which they themſelves freely admit in other Caſes. And whereas they make a mighty Noiſe about Corruptions and Alterations in thoſe Writings, by the Fraud of thoſe through whoſe Hands they have been tranſmitted; a Man of a common Underſtanding, and an honeſt Mind, may be ſatisfied that theſe Clamours are groundleſs; becauſe upon impartially examining thoſe Writings, he finds no Marks of thoſe Corruptions or Innovations there, that he is told have been introduced into the Chriſtian Church in theſe latter Ages, no worldly Schemes of Ambition or Power. And tho' Chriſtians are, and have been for many Ages, divided into many Sects and Parties, very different in many things from one another, yet he finds it generally agreed, that thoſe Writings are preſerved the ſame among them

them all, without any greater Differences than what muſt be expected to ariſe from a great Number of Copies diſperſed in ſeveral Countries, and which do not affect any of the main Facts or Doctrines contained there. Nor have any of the different Parties been able, if they had attempted it, to alter thoſe ſacred Writings in favour of their peculiar Corruptions. Thoſe Writings ſtill exhibit an Idea of Chriſtianity, as it was in its primitive Simplicity. And it is manifeſt, that if they had been deſignedly corrupted and interpolated in ſucceeding Ages after they were firſt publiſhed, they would have been in many things very different from what they now appear. And it is very remarkable, that thoſe very Corruptions among Chriſtians are plainly foretold there, and a great Apoſtacy pointed out by very remarkable Characters.

Thus a good Acquaintance with the ſacred Writings may, in a great meaſure, furniſh a Man of common ſound Underſtanding, that knows no more than his Mother-Tongue, with an Anſwer to the moſt conſiderable Objections brought againſt Chriſtianity. And if, beſides all this, he finds in his own Senſe and Experience, the happy Influence of thoſe ſacred Writings, and of the Doctrines and Motives there contained, upon his own Temper and Conduct, for forming his Soul to the moſt excellent Diſpoſitions towards God and Man, for comforting him in his Afflictions, for engaging him to ſubdue and mortify his corrupt Appetites and Paſſions, for raiſing his Views to the Things which are above, and powerfully drawing him to the Practice of univerſal Holineſs and Virtue: Taking all this together,

ther, his own Senſation, Reaſon, and Experience concur to furniſh the moſt perſuaſive Evidence to convince him that it is divine. To all which it may be added, that a good and upright Man, who is willing to know and do the Will of God, and earneſtly applies to him for his divine Aſſiſtances, may alſo expect the gracious Aids of his Spirit, for farther diſpoſing his Mind more clearly and fully to diſcern and feel the Light and Force of the Goſpel-Evidence. And that there is nothing in ſuch a Suppoſition contrary to Reaſon, I may afterwards ſhew.

As to the Flirts this Gentleman gives at ſome of the Arguments that have been brought for Chriſtianity, ſuch as what he calls *ingenious Applications of myſterious Prophecies, and their References; the profound Calculation of* Daniel's *Weeks, the Analogy of Reaſon and Revelation*; let us ſuppoſe that there are Numbers of thoſe to whom *the Precept of Believing is addreſs'd*, who are not well able to trace theſe, and ſome other Arguments for Chriſtianity, through *all their Connexions and Inferences*; this does by no means prove, either that theſe Arguments are of no uſe at all, or that the Generality of Mankind, though they do not concern themſelves much about them, have not Evidence ſufficient to lay a juſt and reaſonable Foundation for believing. For the Wiſdom of God has ſo ordered it, that the Proofs of Chriſtianity, as well as of Natural Religion, even in its moſt important Principles, admit of great Variety of Illuſtrations and Arguments; ſome of general uſe, and fit to take hold of common Capacities, that will apply themſelves

ſelves to conſider them, and others that are fitted to give farther Light and Conviction even to Perſons of greater Learning and ſuperior Underſtanding; and who often are more liable to be aſſaulted with Doubts and ſubtil Objections than the Vulgar. And if theſe laſt are not capable of all the Proofs, the Force of which appears to the Learned, ſo neither are they liable to all the Difficulties and Objections that lie in the way of the other. And whereas this Author ſeems to think, that Religion, conſidering its Importance, ought to be ſelf-evident, and that it cannot ſtand in need of *far-fetch'd Apologies, and labour'd Arts to reconcile and explain it*, nor can any Part of its *Evidence* be *founded on any Complication of Circumſtances to be traced out with Induſtry and Addreſs* *; for my part, I cannot ſee, why, when no other Knowledge or valuable Attainment can be obtain'd without Care and Induſtry, Religion alone ſhould be inconſiſtent with it, and require no Pains or Care at all. If Religion be of ſuch neceſſity and importance, it certainly deſerves our Care and Diligence. And I cannot think it unbecoming the Wiſdom and Equity of God ſo to order it, that Men cannot be truly religious, or attain either to the Knowledge or Practice of it without Care and Application. Many Arguments in behalf of Truths of the higheſt Importance may be laboured, and yet very uſeful: And there are many that both have leiſure and capacity to conſider and diſcern the Force of them. For tho', as this Gentleman expreſſes it, all *the Candidates of Heaven* be not *Scholars or Philoſophers*,

* P. 21.

yet ſome are; and if thoſe Arguments be inſtrumental to the ſtrengthening the Faith of ſuch Perſons, they anſwer a valuable End: And ſuch Perſons may be of uſe to aſſiſt the Faith of others. And I doubt not, many of thoſe that are uſually called Unlearned, tho' they could not of themſelves without Aſſiſtance trace out the Applications of ſome Prophecies, or calculate *Daniel*'s Weeks, yet may diſcern the Force of the Proofs, and reap the Advantage of them, when ſet in a proper light by others. But I find this Gentleman here, as in ſeveral other Paſſages of his Book, ſeems uneaſy at all Attempts in defence of Chriſtianity. He would fain perſuade Chriſtians never to meddle with Argument at all, or concern themſelves about any of the Evidences or Reaſons produced for it; and, if they will believe him, all Attempts of this kind are uſeleſs, and even pernicious. And this, no doubt, proceeds from his great Friendſhip for Chriſtianity, of which he has given ſo many convincing Proofs in this Performance. It is from the ſame Principle that he repreſents thoſe as the beſt Chriſtians, that *never concern themſelves the leaſt in any argumentative Taſks*, &c *. I allow indeed, that there are good People that perhaps do not much trouble themſelves about the Proofs of Religion in an argumentative way; and where their Faith has a purifying Influence on their Hearts and Lives, it is graciouſly accepted of God. And even in this caſe the Senſe and Diſcernment they have of the internal Characters of Goodneſs and Purity in the Chriſtian Religion, and the happy Influence they feel its Doctrines and

* P. 22.

and Motives have upon them, to engage them to the Practice of Piety and Virtue, is to them a perſuaſive Argument to convince them of its divine Original. But yet I think it can ſcarce be denied, that a Man that takes pains to conſider the Evidences for Chriſtianity, and in conſequence of this firmly believes it, and governs himſelf by its excellent Rules, acts a better Part, and approves himſelf a better Chriſtian, than he that is not ſo diligent to inform himſelf concerning it. But I ſuppoſe our Author would count thoſe the beſt Part of Mankind, that never concern themſelves about any Religion at all; which ſeems to be the Deſign, or at leaſt the Tendency of ſeveral of his Arguments.

This Writer having done all in his power to prove that the Generality of Mankind are incapable of Faith or Religion if it be rational, ſets himſelf next to ſhew, that even Men of Learning, yea, *the ableſt and beſt of Men*, are *diſqualified for fair reaſoning*, or judging impartially of the Evidence of Chriſtianity, by their *natural Prejudices*. That *Prejudice, ever earlier than the firſt Eſſays of Reaſon, is as abſolute a Diſqualification for ſuch a Taſk, as the greateſt natural Incapacity* *. What he farther offers there concerning the Power of Prejudice, appears to me to have no other tendency than to introduce univerſal Scepticiſm; as if no Man living was capable of reaſoning fairly, or judging truly. But it is not true, that the Prejudices to which all Men are in ſome degree ſubjected, do as abſolutely diſqualify a Man for forming a fair and equitable Judgment of Things, as *the greateſt*

* P. 22.

natural Incapacity. In the one caſe it is impoſſible, in the other it is far from being ſo. Where there is an honeſt and an upright Mind, open to Conviction, and ready to receive the Evidence that is offered, a Man may overcome his Prejudices and judge fairly and impartially, as appears from thouſands of Inſtances both in Religion and other Matters. And particularly there were at the firſt Promulgation of Chriſtianity numerous Inſtances of Perſons, that broke thro' the ſtrongeſt Prejudices, *natural Attachments to Cuſtoms, Perſons and Things*, to borrow this Gentleman's Expreſſions, overcome by the Evidence that attended it, and the Proofs of a divine Original. If we have not thoſe Prejudices now in our way, it is an advantage we ſhould be thankful for; and if by being educated in a regard to Chriſtianity we rather have Prejudices in its favour, a juſt and fair Examination and Enquiry may be carried on notwithſtanding this, as hath been already ſhewn.

Our Author concludes this Part of his Attempt with obſerving *, that "It is to be remembred all "along, and carried with us carefully thro' all "theſe Conſiderations, that the great Command "to believe is peremptory and abſolute. No Con-"ditions in the caſe, that we ſhall believe if we "have *Time*, if we have *Abilities*, or if preceding "*Prejudices* have not firſt taken too faſt hold to "prevent us." It is true, there are no ſuch Conditions expreſſed, and it would be abſurd if there were ſo. Suppoſing that upon giving a Revelation of his Will to Mankind, attended with ſuch Evidence

* P. 23.

Evidence as he ſaw and knew to be ſufficient if it were not their own faults, God ſhould command them to believe and to receive it, which I have ſhewn in ſuch a caſe he might juſtly do; it would not be very wiſe to expreſs it thus, Believe, and receive it, if you have *Time*; Believe, if you have *Abilities*; Believe, if *Prejudices have not taken too faſt hold to prevent you.* This would have been regarded as giving an Allowance to Unbelief and Diſobedience in the Law itſelf. People would ſoon have taken advantage of it. and it would have been the ready way to render them careleſs and negligent about it. If ſuch a Command were deſigned to have any effect at all, it muſt be delivered in peremptory and abſolute Terms, the better to awaken the Attention of Mankind, and engage them to apply themſelves to conſider the Evidence without delay, and to take pains to diveſt themſelves of culpable Prejudices. If it appears, that they really had not natural Abilities, or were under an invincible Incapacity, which may be often pretended where it is far from being the caſe, the ſupreme Lawgiver will eaſily be able to make the proper Allowances, when he comes to judge them for their Conduct.

Nor does it follow from the Command's being expreſſed in general Terms, that an equal Degree of Faith is required of all Men in order to Salvation; or that all Men are *required at the Peril of their Souls to be in the right*; that is, to have a right Notion and Belief in all the Doctrines propoſed to us to be believed. Thus our Author thinks fit to repreſent it in his Pamphlet. But nothing is more

more evident, than that in Scripture it is all along ſuppoſed, that there are different Degrees of Faith and Knowledge; and that Perſons may be *weak in Faith*, who yet are ſincere, and ſhall be accepted. Some are repreſented as *Babes in Chriſt*, ſome as *ſtrong Men:* Some as knowing only *the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God*; others, as arrived to a higher Degree of Knowledge, and *going on unto Perfection*; a Faith that is true and acceptable in its firſt Commencement, is yet repreſented as capable of *growing exceedingly*, and of receiving great Increaſe and continual Improvement. With regard to Truths of the higheſt Importance, even in natural Religion, ſuch as the Being of a God, and a Providence, tho' ſome Knowledge and Belief of this is neceſſary, and lies at the Foundation of all Religion, yet it is not abſolutely required, that all Men ſhould be equally right in their Notions concerning it, and in the Ideas they form of God and his Attributes. It is ſufficient if there be ſuch a Belief as engages them to love and reverence, to worſhip and obey him in Sincerity. The ſame may be ſaid with regard to Chriſtianity. It is not abſolutely required as neceſſary to Salvation, that Men ſhould believe and think rightly of all the Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion, tho' in themſelves true and of great Importance; or that even in Points of the higheſt Conſequence they ſhould exactly have the ſame Ideas, and their Notions be alike clear and juſt. They may, with regard to ſome Things in thoſe Doctrines, have miſtaken Notions; but a merciful God will make Allowances for their Weakneſs, and graciouſly accept their

Faith

Faith as ſufficient, if they know and believe ſo much of theſe Things, as engages them to love *Jeſus Chriſt* in Sincerity, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World. Where this is the Caſe, Men ſhall be accepted according to the Goſpel-Covenant, tho' there be a great variety in their Attainments, and in the Degrees of their Faith and Knowledge.

Hitherto this Gentleman has labour'd hard to prove that a rational Faith is unattainable or impoſſible; but from *p.* 24. to *p.* 35. he bends himſelf to ſhew, that ſuppoſing a Man to have attained to the higheſt degree of a rational Faith, it would be no way ſufficient to anſwer the End, or to *furniſh out thoſe Effects which are deſcribed* in the Goſpel to *attend a juſt Belief*. It will never produce that *active Zeal* for Religion, or that Conſtancy and *Perſeverance* that is there required, or that *Complacency and Satisfaction of Mind, which is the bleſſed Effect of a true and genuine Faith.* It will not be ſufficient to engage a Man to mortify his *depraved Appetites* and *Paſſions*, much leſs to ſuffer *Martyrdom*, if called to it, for his Religion.

In what he offers to prove, that a rational Faith can never produce that Zeal which the Goſpel requires, the Force of his Argument depends partly upon the wrong Account he gives of the Nature of a true Chriſtian Zeal, as if it were a blind irrational Heat, a *Zeal not according to Knowledge*, and partly upon Sceptical Principles, as if no Man can ever in Reaſon be certain of any thing, becauſe it is poſſible he may be miſtaken. But if by Zeal be meant what the Goſpel intends by it, a hearty and

and ardent Concern for propagating important Truth and Duty, not by Methods of Perſecution and Violence, which the Goſpel never recommends, but by Perſuaſion and Argument, and all Methods conſiſtent with Juſtice and Charity; this is what Reaſon cannot but approve. And the bare Poſſibility of a Man's being miſtaken, will never be in reaſon ſufficient to render him indifferent about what he apprehends upon the moſt impartial Conſideration to be true, and of great conſequence to the Cauſe of Religion and Virtue. In ſuch a caſe, if he hath any love to Truth, or any concern for the Honour of the Deity, or for the Good of Mankind; that is, if he be a Man really of good Diſpoſitions, he cannot but be deſirous to ſpread the Knowledge of ſuch Truths by all fair and juſt Methods that are in his power.

As this Gentleman, the better to anſwer his End, has thought fit to repreſent the Zeal required in the Goſpel as a *Zeal without Knowledge*, an irrational Fervour, ſo to prove that a rational Faith cannot produce that Perſeverance which is the Duty of Chriſtians, he repreſents this Perſeverance to be an obſtinate Reſolution to diſclaim all farther Trial, and ſhut their Eyes againſt all Evidence that might be offered, tho' never ſo ſtrong; and in effect to be, what he had before repreſented it, a *blind and fooliſh Obſtinacy to a preſent Notion.* But if by Perſeverance be underſtood a ſteady and conſtant Adherence to what a Man is upon good grounds perſuaded is Truth and Duty, ſo as not to ſuffer himſelf to be turned from it by worldly Bribes or Threatnings, or to be ſhaken by the Arts of ſubtil Seducers;

Seducers; this is a Temper of Mind becoming a wiſe and good Man, and is what right Reaſon approves. That a Man ought not for any worldly Conſiderations to renounce and deny what he is convinced in his own Conſcience is true and right, is a Duty that natural Religion preſcribes; and it is alſo highly reaſonable, that when a Man has once got his Mind well-eſtabliſhed in the main Principles of Religion upon good and ſolid grounds, he ſhould not ſuffer himſelf to be eaſily turned aſide by every Wind of Doctrine. It is thought very reaſonable in other caſes to proceed upon things well proved, to lay them down as Principles, and not to be for ever diſputing them over again. Where a Thing is once confirmed by Arguments ſufficient in their kind, the greateſt Maſters of Reaſon have acknowledged that we ought not to be ſhaken from it by Objections, tho' we may perhaps find it hard to anſwer them. And the contrary Conduct cannot properly be called an Openneſs to Conviction, but an Unſteadineſs and Volatility of Mind, which is not the Effect of Reaſon, but is really a Diſeaſe, and a very pernicious one; and which, where it prevails, hinders a Man from being ever ſettled in any Principles at all. This indeed ſeems to be what this Gentleman intends. The Strain of his arguing, *p.* 25, 26, 27. is to this purpoſe, that a Man can never come to a ſatisfying Certainty or *Aſſurance of Truth* in any point whatſoever, becauſe he is not *infallible*, and may *poſſibly be miſtaken*; and becauſe it *is not impoſſible but ſome new Evidence may ſucceed*, and he may hereafter ſee Things in a different light; and that there-

fore a rational Faith muſt always be *precarious, and ſubject to change.* But this way of reaſoning is very fallacious. A Man may be ſufficiently certain of a Truth, to lay a juſt Foundation for a Satisfaction of Mind, and for a ſuitable Courſe of Action, when upon the moſt impartial Conſideration it appears to him founded upon ſolid Arguments, tho' at the ſame time he knows he is not infallible. And it is very abſurd, to pretend that no Man can ever be ſure of what he is convinced by Reaſon and Argument is true, becauſe there is a bare remote Poſſibility that ſome time or other he may alter his Judgment concerning it. I ſee no other tendency in all this, but to unſettle Perſons from all Principles whatſoever, and to keep them in an eternal Fluctuation and Uncertainty; which is what neither Reaſon preſcribes, nor the Author of our Beings ever intended.

In matters of Practice relating to the Affairs of this Life, it would be abſurd to the laſt degree, to ſay that a Man muſt never act nor come to a determinate Reſolution, till he is abſolutely ſure it could not poſſibly be otherwiſe. And it would be equally abſurd, to advance this as a Principle in Matters of Faith and Religion, on which the Practice of Holineſs and Virtue and our Preparations for a future World ſo much depend; and the Conſequences of neglecting a proper preſent Practice upon bare remote Surmiſes and Poſſibilities, would be in this caſe infinitely more pernicious.

The laſt Part of his Argument, and what he moſt largely inſiſts upon, is, that a rational Faith, *i. e.* a Faith founded on rational Conviction and Evidence,

Evidence, can never have force enough to engage us to mortify our *moſt beloved Affections and Appetites*, much leſs to engage us to ſuffer Martyrdom for the Truth, if called to it. He declaims upon this Subject with a great deal of Rhetorick, from *p.* 30. to *p.* 35. He paints the Difficulty of ſubduing the Paſſions, and of a virtuous Life, in the ſtrongeſt Colours; and in ſuch a manner, that one would be apt to think he felt in himſelf what he deſcribed, and that his own Inclinations and Appetites were much too ſtrong for his Reaſon.

The Streſs of his Argument lies here, that the utmoſt Certainty and Evidence that Faith can attain to in a rational way, is a moral Certainty and Evidence, and that this can never be ſufficient to the Purpoſes of Religion. He is ready *to grant all the moral Certainty in the Proofs of Religion that you can reaſonably deſire; and farther, that this is indeed the higheſt degree of rational Evidence, that the Nature of the Subject can poſſibly admit of.* He ſuppoſes it to *have all the moſt favourable Circumſtances, that the ſevereſt Malice of an exceptious Critick can demand* *. One would think theſe were pretty large Conceſſions; but at the ſame time, and almoſt in the ſame breath, in which he ſeems to allow ſuch a degree of Certainty to that moral Evidence, he repreſents it as after all *an Uncertainty, a doubtful Account*; that it is *ſtill but human Teſtimony in its nature, ever liable to Error, as depending only on fallible Authors.* That it cannot produce a *thorough Conviction*; and *its true Amount in a time of Trial is, that it is nothing*

* P. 31, 32.

more than the precarious Conjecture of a fallible Judge, upon the traditional Teſtimony of a fallible Witneſs. He has more to the ſame purpoſe, *pag.* 52, 53. where he ſeems willing to carry it ſo far, as not to allow that any Man can be ſure of any thing, but what he himſelf ſees with his own Eyes.

It is very eaſy to declaim, in a plauſible manner, on the Weakneſs and Inſufficiency of moral Evidence, and the Fallibility of hiſtorical human Teſtimony; and this ſeems to be a darling Commonplace with theſe Gentlemen. But it is all mere Harangue, and only fit to impoſe upon thoſe that will ſuffer themſelves to be carried away with Sounds; ſince it cannot be denied, that this kind of Evidence may be, and often is ſo circumſtanced, that the Man would ſcarce be looked upon to be in his Senſes, that ſhould ſeriouſly deny or doubt of it. It is but by moral Evidence, and the Teſtimony of fallible Men, capable of deceiving and being deceived, that I know there is ſuch a Place as *Paris* or *Rome*; for I never ſaw either of thoſe Cities; and yet I can no more reaſonably doubt of it, than if I myſelf had been there. It is by moral Evidence that we have all our Laws, the Records of our own or any other Nation, and that we enjoy the Benefit of the Knowledge and Experience of former Ages, and have any Aſſurance of paſt Facts; and yet is there any Man of common Senſe, that does not as certainly believe many ſuch Facts that were done in former Ages, as he believes any Event that happened of late Years, and within his own Memory? It is manifeſt, that the Author of

our

our Beings, and the wiſe Governour of the World, deſigned that moſt part of our Knowledge ſhould come in this way, and that we ſhould be governed and determined by this kind of Evidence and Teſtimony, in many Caſes of great Importance. The Neceſſity we are under to do this, ariſeth from the very Frame of our Nature, and the Conſtitution of Things, and the Circumſtances in which we are placed in the World, and conſequently from the Will and Appointment of God himſelf. Why then ſhould it be thought abſurd to ſuppoſe that he ſhould order it ſo, that our Knowledge of ſome important Matters of Religion ſhould alſo come in this way? Can any Reaſon be aſſigned, why when this is allowed to be proper and ſufficient with regard to all other Facts, it ſhould not be admitted with regard to Facts in which Religion is nearly concerned? And yet our Author declaims pathetically upon it, *Pag.* 50, 51. and aſks, *Are we to imagine, that God would ever leave a Matter of ſuch Conſequence upon ſuch a Foundation?* If God has been ever pleaſed to give a Revelation to Mankind at all, all but the Perſons that lived in the very Age and Place in which that Revelation was firſt made, muſt receive the Doctrines and Laws of it, and the Knowledge of the Facts by which it was atteſted in that way; and if that Revelation be tranſmitted to us in a way, which we ourſelves ſhould count unqueſtionable in any other Caſe, and we have as much aſſurance of the Facts, as we could juſtly expect concerning any Facts done at that diſtance, he may reaſonably require our Aſſent; and our refuſing in ſuch a caſe to yield an Aſſent,

ſent, could not be properly ſaid to be owing to a Want of Evidence, becauſe we admit ſuch Evidence in other Caſes, but to ſome other Cauſes, and thoſe not very juſtifiable ones, and to an Averſion and Oppoſition of Mind to its Doctrines and Laws. And I am afraid, that in ſuch a caſe it would hardly be accepted as a ſufficient Excuſe for Perſons to plead, that they *laboured under the inſuperable Incapacity of a particular Infidel Make, and Anti-chriſtian Complexion,* as he expreſſes it *, which put it *entirely out of their power to join in giving an Aſſent*; ſince this Infidel Conſtitution would appear not to be of God's making, but of their own.

If the Laws and Doctrines of the Chriſtian Revelation are tranſmitted to us with as much Evidence as we could reaſonably expect, ſuppoſing a Revelation really to have been given ſome Ages ago; and if we have all that Evidence concerning the extraordinary Facts whereby it was originally atteſted, which could well be expected ſuppoſing thoſe Facts really to have been done; he that receives that Revelation, its Doctrines and Laws, and the Accounts of the Facts upon that Evidence, *i. e.* upon as high Evidence as the Nature of the thing will bear, may approve himſelf to God and his own Conſcience, as having acted a right part, and ſuch, as we may ſuppoſe, a wiſe and righteous God will graciouſly accept from reaſonable Beings. And on the other hand, it may be juſtly queſtioned, whether they that refuſe to accept a Revelation as coming from God, though attended with all the Evidence that any paſt Revelation could be juſtly expected

* P. 45.

expected to have, can approve themſelves to the great Governour of the World and Lord of Conſcience, as having acted an honeſt and reaſonable part. For it is in effect, as if a Man ſhould declare, let a Revelation have been given in former Ages never ſo well atteſted and confirmed, and tho' that Revelation is tranſmitted with all the Evidence, and in as ſure a way as a Revelation given in paſt Ages could be tranſmitted, yet I will not receive it, becauſe it was given in former Ages; that is, becauſe I myſelf did not live at the time when it was firſt given. And it would be as reaſonable to plead before a human Tribunal, I will not be governed by any Laws given in former Ages before I was born, nor acknowledge their Authority, tho' I have all the Proofs of their Authority that I can have concerning Laws enacted in former Ages. If any Man ſhould pretend to act thus in the Caſe of human Laws, let him profeſs never ſo much Impartiality, and that he acts to the beſt of his Judgment, or declaim never ſo rhetorically on the Inſufficiency of moral Evidence; I am apt to think, it would hardly hinder his being puniſhed for violating thoſe Laws, except the Court ſhould be ſo kind as to take his making ſuch a Plea for a Proof of his being not right in his Senſes.

This Writer, under pretence of doing honour to Religion and Faith, all along ſuppoſes, that nothing leſs will do, than ſuch an abſolute Certainty as excludes all Poſſibility of Miſtake. That *it is not ſufficient to ſay, there is great Appearance of Probability; there muſt be an abſolute Certainty, without the leaſt Poſſibility of our being diſappointed in*

in our Security *: Or, as he elſewhere expreſſes it, that *it muſt be ſufficiently calculated to extort an Aſſent from every one that hears it* †. As if no Evidence would be ſufficient in Religion, but one that is plainly irreſiſtible, and forces itſelf upon us whether we will or no. He frequently talks, as if every thing that had not ſuch an abſolute Certainty as to exclude all Poſſibility of the contrary, were for that reaſon *doubtful*, no more than a *precarious Conjecture*, incapable to produce a ſatisfying *Conviction*; when any Man that has ever reflected on the Nature of Evidence at all, muſt be ſenſible, that things may be ſo certain as to leave no room for reaſonable Doubt, that yet are not ſo abſolutely certain as to be without the leaſt Poſſibility of Error.

It will be eaſily allowed, that the greater Certainty any Man attains to in Religion, it is the better, and more likely both to yield him thorough Satisfaction of Mind, and to have a happy Influence upon his Conduct. But it is far from being true, that there can be no right or ſaving Faith, without the higheſt poſſible Degree of Certainty and Aſſurance. That Faith is ſufficient, though mixed with ſome Doubting, where a Man is ſatisfied that he has more convincing Reaſons to believe the Scripture, than any thing that can be brought to the contrary, and when, in conſequence of this, he is prevailed with to ſubmit to its Authority and Laws, and to comply with the Terms of the Goſpel-Covenant. If it were only very probable, that the Chriſtian Religion is of God, it would

* P. 32. † P. 110.

would be both our Duty and our Wiſdom to embrace and receive it, and to govern our Conduct by its excellent Precepts. No Man could run a hazard in ſuch a caſe, by receiving the Goſpel, or at leaſt a hazard equal to what he would run on the other ſide. Suppoſing, by obeying the Laws of the Goſpel, he ſhould deny himſelf ſome Liberties, and controul his Paſſions in the manner that Religion preſcribes, which doth not require us to extirpate the Paſſions, but to govern them, and keep them within proper Bounds; this is no more than what ſome of the greateſt Philoſophers and wiſeſt Men in all Ages have adviſed to, as the beſt way for a Man's own Satisfaction and Tranquillity, and for preſerving Body and Mind in a right Temper. Or, if he ſhould be called to ſuffer Martyrdom, it is a Conduct that Reaſon preſcribes, to ſuffer any temporal Loſſes and Inconveniences, and Death itſelf, even for the Probability of obtaining eternal Happineſs. In other Caſes, Men think it reaſonable to hazard ſome preſent Loſs, and to undergo ſome preſent Hardſhips and Inconveniences on the probable Proſpect of ſome conſiderable Advantage to be procured by it. But where the Advantage propoſed, is ſo infinitely great as the Rewards of Religion, it ought proportionably to have a more powerful Influence. And I think it cannot reaſonably be denied, that the Man that had as great a Certainty of the Truths of Religion, and the important things it ſets before us, as we have of many things that come to us by hiſtorical and moral Evidence, would be utterly inexcuſable, if he did not govern himſelf by its Directions, whatſoever preſent

Inconveniences it might bring upon him: And he would juſtly deſerve to be branded as guilty of the greateſt and moſt criminal Folly, who, to gratify a preſent inordinate Paſſion and Appetite, would run the hazard of expoſing himſelf even to the Probability of ſuch a future Miſery and Puniſhment, as the Goſpel denounces againſt thoſe that perſiſt to indulge themſelves in vicious licentious Courſes.

But beſides all that might be, and often has been offered, concerning the Sufficiency of that Evidence that can be brought for the Goſpel-Revelation, it muſt be farther conſidered, that when all this is accompanied to the Minds of good Men with the Influences of the Holy Spirit, it may well be ſuppoſed to give it a ſtill ſtronger Force. And it is the Doctrine of the holy Scriptures, and there is nothing in it but what is highly agreeable to Reaſon itſelf, that the wiſe and merciful Parent of our Beings, who knows our Weakneſſes and the many Temptations of this preſent State, is ready to communicate his gracious Influences to aſſiſt humble and ſincere Minds, ſenſible of their Dependence upon him, and who apply to him for his Help; which he can eaſily do, in ſuch a way as is perfectly agreeable to the juſt Order of our Natures, and ſo as not to offer Violence to our Faculties, or to the Freedom that belongs to us as reaſonable Creatures, moral Agents, and in ſuch a way as not to render our own Endeavours, or the Exerciſe of our own Reaſon needleſs or uſeleſs. And ſuppoſing ſuch divine Influences neceſſary in the preſent State of Mankind, that the Faith of the Goſpel may

have

have its proper Effect upon us, this can by no means be juſtly improved to ſhew that Chriſtianity is not founded on Argument; for in this caſe, all the Argument and rational Evidence brought for it, is ſtill ſuppoſed, and ſtands in all its force: Or, that Reaſon, or the Intellectual Faculty, is not deſigned to lead us into it; for the divine Spirit works by and with Reaſon, or the Intellectual Faculty. The Conviction wrought upon the Mind in this way, is ſtill rational; and it is the Underſtanding that is enlightned and convinced. The Influence of the Spirit of God doth not exclude the Uſe of Reaſon, but ſets the Reaſonableneſs and Excellency of Religion in a more affecting light, and cauſes the Soul more ſtrongly to diſcern the Characters of divine Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Purity, that are in it, and to feel the Power of its Motives: Reaſon therefore, or the Intellectual Faculty, and the Influence of divine Grace, or the Holy Spirit, are not to be oppoſed to one another as inconſiſtent things, but are to be conſidered as in a friendly Conjunction, and the latter is deſigned by God, in his great Goodneſs, to give a farther Degree of Light and Force to the former.

I have now gone through the firſt Part of this Gentleman's Performance; and which, in my opinion, looks the moſt plauſible of any thing he hath offered. The Strength of his Book depends upon the Principles here laid down; and for that reaſon I have conſidered them more largely than at firſt I intended to do. My Letter is already grown to ſuch a Length, that I ſhall not now com-

communicate ſome further Remarks I have drawn up on other Parts of this extraordinary Pamphlet. I may poſſibly, if you inſiſt upon it, communicate them to you in another Letter. In the mean time, I am, *&c.*

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Containing

REMARKS

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LETTER II.

SIR,

IT is a ſatisfaction to me, that my former Letter was not diſpleaſing to you; in which, in obedience to your Commands, I communicated to you ſome Remarks that occurred to me upon the Pamphlet that has made ſo much noiſe, *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument.*

In that Letter, after having made ſome general Remarks on the Nature and Tendency of this Pamphlet, I applied my ſelf particularly to conſider the firſt Part of it; in which the Author propoſes to ſhew, that "Reaſon or the Intellectual "Faculty could not poſſibly, both from its own "Nature and that of Religion, be the Principle "intended by God to lead us into a true Faith." Or, in other Words, for this is evidently his Meaning, that God never intended we ſhould make uſe of our Reaſon or Intellectual Faculty in believing, or that our Faith ſhould be founded upon any Evidence that might convince the Underſtanding.

In the ſucceeding Parts of his Pamphlet, he propoſes to prove the ſame thing from Scripture, and to ſhew what is the true Principle of Faith that is there aſſigned.

The firſt thing he offers from Scripture to ſhew that Faith has nothing to do with the Underſtanding, or as he expreſſes it, *p.* 35. that *no Appeal to the Underſtanding was ever made or intended*, is drawn from thoſe Expreſſions, "leſt they ſhould "underſtand with their Hearts——their fooliſh "Heart was darkned——Purified their Hearts by "Faith—" which *Expreſſions*, he obſerves, *are applicable with no Propriety to the Intellectual Faculty, but are evidently deſcriptive of the Will only* *. But a very moderate Acquaintance with the ſacred Writings may ſatisfy any Man, that the Heart is in Scripture-Language often put for the Underſtanding or Intellectual Faculty †. And as to the particular Paſſages referred to by this Writer, that Phraſe of *underſtanding with the Heart* cannot be underſtood ſo as to exclude the intellectual Faculty, but neceſſarily ſuppoſes it. And when it is ſaid of the *Heathens*, that their *fooliſh Heart was darkned*, it is plain this is deſigned to ſignify, that their Underſtanding was darkned, and had not a juſt Knowledge and Diſcernment of Things; tho' it is there alſo ſuppoſed, that the Depravity of their Will and moral Diſpoſitions had a great Influence in corrupting their Judgment. And that Expreſſion of *purifying the Heart by Faith* ſhews indeed that Faith where it is ſincere and of the right kind has a purifying Influence on the Temper and

* P. 36. † 2 Chron. i. 10, 12. Job xxxviii. 36. Eccleſ. viii. 5.

and Diſpoſition of the Soul; but how it can be concluded from thence, that Faith is not a rational Thing, or has nothing to do with the Underſtanding, I cannot ſee.

But our Author chuſes rather to *enlarge upon a Particular, which appears to him entirely uncontrovertible, and that is, the plain narrative Part of the Hiſtory, as far as it relates to the Buſineſs of planting the Goſpel, and the Manner by which it was attempted**.

Some things that he obſerves upon this Narrative will be eaſily granted him, as, That *Chriſt taught* his Diſciples and the People *as one having Authority*, and that he *conſidered himſelf as the Perſon he was, or one who derived from Heaven the Inſtructions he was communicating.* That he did not deal with his Diſciples in a way of *Sophiſtry and Syllogiſm.* That neither he nor his Apoſtles attempted to prove every ſingle Doctrine they taught, or Precept they delivered, by entering into a tedious Diſcuſſion, or by a long Train of laborious Reaſonings, after the manner of the Schools. But it by no means follows, that becauſe *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles did not convert Men by arguing with them in a philoſophical way, which would have made but little Impreſſion on the Generality of Mankind, who either have not capacity to underſtand, or leiſure to attend to a Courſe of nice and ſubtil Argumentation, that therefore they expected or required Men to believe without any Reaſon or Evidence at all, which is the Repreſentation this Gentleman is pleaſed to make of it. On

* P. 36.

the contrary, it is manifeſt from the Account given us in Scripture, that as they propoſed the Doctrines and Laws they delivered to Mankind, in the Name and as by the Authority of God himſelf, which gave them another kind of Force than the mere Reaſonings of Philoſophers would have done; ſo they gave the World the moſt convincing Proofs that they were indeed ſent of God, and that they received the Doctrines and Laws they delivered, by Revelation from him. In which caſe Reaſon and common Senſe directed Men to believe thoſe Doctrines and ſubmit to thoſe Laws. For it is the Voice of Nature and Reaſon, that if God gives a Revelation to Mankind, what is there taught and enjoined, ought to be believed and received upon his Authority, provided we have ſufficient Proofs to convince us that ſuch a Revelation came from God.

But to return to our Author's Account of the Goſpel-Narrative, the Sum of it is this; That *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles required Men to believe at once without Reaſon or Evidence, and pronounced Damnation againſt them if they did not. That *Chriſt* did not *lay the Proofs of his Miſſion frankly before his Diſciples, nor give them time calmly to conſider them*; and that he refuſed to *explain himſelf* to them when they wanted it, and diſcouraged their *Enquiries*. That he required thoſe that came to him to be healed, to believe before he healed them, which plainly ſhews, that *the Conviction was to precede the Evidence, as the Terms of the Favour to be conſequently conferred* *. That he ever

* P. 36, 37.

ever diſclaimed with the utmoſt Reſentment ſuch Followers as were deſirous to canvaſs the Evidence, and diſcouraged no Temper with ſo conſtant an Averſion, as that of ſeeking a Sign *. And whereas it might be alledged, that he produced his Miracles as Evidences of his divine Miſſion, our Author affirms and endeavours after his Manner to ſhew, that he had *no Intention to prove his Truth and Character* by thoſe Works †. That he both *expected* and *accepted the ſudden Converſion of many upon little or no ſeeming Evidence*; and nothing was of *greater Merit* than an *extempore Subſcription.* And that he *rejected ſome Perſons immediately when they had not Minds prepared to believe at once, and gave them up inſtantly to the Hardneſs of their Hearts without Remedy* ||. That the Apoſtles did all *along tread punctually in their Maſter's Steps, inſiſting conſtantly on the ready Acknowledgement of their Doctrines, without any Conceſſions of Time for Doubt or Deliberation.* And that *of the Terms of the Covenant one Declaration was often thought ſufficient, and the leaſt ſtanding off gave up the Unbeliever to Reprobation* ‡. That it was required of thoſe to whom the Goſpel was preached, that *they ſhould not one Moment withhold their Aſſent*, and that the Apoſtles very *juſtly expected to make their Converts with a Word's ſpeaking* **. That their Office was only to *circulate their Creeds*; *they were not ſent to diſpute, but to preach.* And that in like manner the *Directions* they gave to *their deputed Succeſſors* was not to

* P. 38, 49. † P. 48—50. || P. 37, 65, 66, 67. ‡ P. 38. ** P. 42

to *confute* or *argue* with thoſe whom they were to receive to the Faith *.

Such is the Repreſentation this Gentleman is pleaſed to make, and which he pretends is plain from the ſacred Hiſtory, of the Method made uſe of by our Saviour and his Apoſtles in *planting the Goſpel.* Let us now ſee from *Chriſt*'s own Declarations, and from the Hiſtory of the Goſpel and the Acts of the Apoſtles, whether this Account be true. After which I ſhall take notice, as far as it may be neceſſary, of the Inſtances produced by this Writer to ſupport the Account he gives.

With regard to our Saviour himſelf, he was ſo far from requiring Men to believe on his bare Word without Proof, that he declared, *if I bear witneſs of my ſelf*, that is, if I have no other Evidence but my bare Word, *my Witneſs is not* true †. He encouraged Examination and Enquiry, *Search the Scriptures*, ſaid he to the *Jews*, *for they are they which teſtify of me* ‖. Inſtead of forbidding them to judge fairly and impartially, and to uſe their Underſtandings, he expoſtulates with them for not doing ſo. *Why even of your ſelves judge ye not that which is right? Judge not according to Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment* **. The Faith he approves is founded in the Underſtanding. He deſcribes the good Hearer of the Word to be one that *heareth the Word and underſtandeth it, which alſo beareth Fruit* ‡. In his Diſcourſe to the *Jews*, he frequently appeals to the illuſtrious Atteſtations that were given him, and the

* P. 39, 40. † John v. 31. ‖ John v. 39. ** Luke xii. 54—57. John vii. 24. ‡ Matt. xiii. 23.

the manifeſt Proofs he exhibited of his divine *Miſſion*. Thus, after having ſpoken of the remarkable Teſtimony given him by *John* the Baptiſt, he adds, *but I have a greater Witneſs than that of* John: *for the Works which the Father hath given me to finiſh, the ſame Works that I do, bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me* *. And again, *If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, tho' ye believe not me, believe the Works, that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him* †. And, ſpeaking of the *Jews* and *Phariſees* that did not believe in him, he ſaith, *If I had not come and ſpoken unto them, they had not had Sin, but now they have no Cloke for their Sin*; and then adds, *If I had not done among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin* ‖. Where he evidently ſuppoſes, that his Works bore Teſtimony to his Doctrine and divine Miſſion; and that they were Proofs ſo ſtrong and convincing, as left them utterly without Excuſe in their Unbelief. And this may help us to judge of the Sincerity and Candour of this Writer, who confidently affirms, in expreſs Contradiction to our Saviour's own Declarations, that he had not *any ſuch Meaning or Intention to convince Perſons*, or *to prove his own Truth and Character by his Works*; and inſinuates, that he was not *ſollicitous to gain Proſelytes by ſuch Means*, and was *conſcious he had nothing of that kind to produce*. P. 49, 50.

What

* John v. 36, 37. † John x. 24, 37, 38. xiv. 10, 11.
‖ John xv. 22, 24.

What the Method was that was taken after our Lord's Aſcenſion to propagate the Chriſtian Faith, we have a full Account in the Acts of the Apoſtles. That Book opens with an admirable Diſcourſe of the Apoſtle *Peter* to the *Jews* on the Day of Pentecoſt, in which he reaſons ſtrongly from the holy Scriptures, and from the extraordinary divine Atteſtations given from Heaven, to convince the *Jews*, that *Jeſus*, whom they had crucified, was Lord and Chriſt. And we have an Account of ſeveral other excellent Diſcourſes of his in that ſacred Book. Concerning *Stephen* the firſt Martyr, we are told, that as he *did great Wonders and Miracles among the People*, ſo when ſeveral of the *Jews diſputed with him, they were not able to reſiſt the Spirit and Wiſdom, with which he ſpake* *. He was therefore able to give good Reaſons for the Faith, and ſuch as they could not confute. St. *Paul laboured more abundantly* than any of the other Apoſtles in ſpreading the Faith of the Goſpel, and what his uſual manner was we are informed *Acts* xvii. 2, 3. where we are told, that at *Theſſalonica, Paul, as his manner was, went into the Synagogue of the* Jews, *and three Sabbath-days he reaſoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging, that Chriſt muſt needs have ſuffered, and riſen again from the Dead, and that this* Jeſus, *whom I preach unto you, is the Chriſt.* Here it is plain, quite contrary to the Repreſentation made by our Author, that his manner of making Converts was not to urge them to believe without a Reaſon for it, but ſtrongly to reaſon with them, in

* Acts vi. 9, 10.

in order to convince them. The Account that is there given of the *Beræans* is very remarkable. *Paul* and *Silas* went into the Synagogue to preach to them, and reaſon with them, as they had done at *Theſſalonica*. And it is obſerved by the ſacred Hiſtorian, that *they were more noble than thoſe at* Theſſalonica, *in that they received the Word with all Readineſs of Mind*; that is, without Prejudice, and with Minds open to Conviction, *and ſearched the Scriptures daily, whether thoſe Things were ſo.* And what was the Conſequence? *Therefore many of them believed* *. Here it appears, that the Apoſtles were far from being Enemies to a free and fair Enquiry. The *Beræans* are commended for taking pains to examine, and the reſult of their impartial Examination was their embracing the Chriſtian Faith. In the ſame Chapter we find St. *Paul* at *Athens* diſputing and reaſoning with the *Athenians* in an excellent manner. At *Corinth* he *reaſoned in the Synagogue every Sabbath, and perſuaded the* Jews *and the* Greeks; and he *continued there a Year and ſix Months, teaching the Word of God among them* †. What needed he have ſtaid ſo long there, if, according to this Gentleman's Repreſentation, the Apoſtles expected to make their Converts with a Word's ſpeaking, and never allowed *Time* for examining or deliberating concerning the Evidences of Chriſtianity? And it was in conſequence of his taking ſo much time in teaching and inſtructing them in the Faith, that he erected that flouriſhing Church of the *Corinthians*. And before this we are told,

* Acts xvii. 10, 11, 12. † Acts xviii. 4, 11.

that *Paul* and *Barnabas abode a long time at* Iconium, *ſpeaking boldly in the Lord, which gave teſtimony unto the Word of his Grace, and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by their hands* *. At *Epheſus* he *went into the Synagogue, and ſpake boldly for the ſpace of three Months, diſputing and perſuading the Things concerning the Kingdom of God.* And afterwards, he *diſputed daily in the School of one* Tyrannus; and thus *continued by the ſpace of two Years; ſo that all they which dwelt in* Aſia, *heard the Word of the Lord* Jeſus, *both* Jews *and* Greeks. And how aſſiduous he was all that time in inſtructing them, appears from his Appeal to the Elders of *Epheſus* in his admirable Speech to them. And in conſequence of all this, of ſuch aſſiduous teaching, and reaſoning, accompanied with the moſt glorious miraculous Atteſtations, it is obſerved there were great Numbers brought to the Chriſtian Faith. *So mightily*, ſays the ſacred Hiſtorian, *grew the Word of God, and prevailed* †. That theſe were the Methods made uſe of for ſpreading the Faith of Chriſt, farther appears from the Epiſtles St. *Paul* writ to the Churches he had planted. Thoſe Epiſtles are every where full of Reaſonings, and his manner of addreſſing the Chriſtian Converts on many occaſions, ſufficiently ſhews how far he was from deſiring a blind Faith without Underſtanding: *In Malice be ye Children, but in Underſtanding be ye Men. Be ye not unwiſe, but underſtanding what the Will of the Lord is. I ſpeak as to wiſe Men, judge ye what I ſay. Prove or try all things, hold*

* Acts xiv. 1, 2. † Acts xix. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 20.

hold faſt that which is good *. Is this the Language of a Man that thought believing the Goſpel was inconſiſtent with Examination and Enquiry, and had nothing to do with the Underſtanding? and that Perſons were not to know why they believed, and upon what Grounds? When the Apoſtle *Peter* urges the Believers to whom he writes, to be *ready always to give an Anſwer to every Man that* ſhould *aſk* them a *Reaſon of the Hope that is in them, with Meekneſs and Fear* †, *i. e.* with Modeſty and Gravity; this certainly ſuppoſes, that they themſelves had reaſon for believing, and that they were able to give an Account of it to others too. And whereas this Writer inſinuates, that as the Apoſtles never argued themſelves, ſo they left Inſtructions to their Succeſſors never to diſpute or argue; this is ſo far from being true, that the Apoſtle inſiſts upon it as a proper Qualification of a Teacher of the Goſpel, that he ſhould be *able by ſound Doctrine both to exhort and to convince the Gainſayers* ||. Nor were they to give them up at once to immediate Reprobation, but to reaſon with them with Meekneſs and Temper. *The Servant of the Lord muſt be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient, in Meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves* ‡. The ſame Apoſtle ſpeaking of the falſe Teachers, repreſents them as *underſtanding neither what they ſay, nor whereof they affirm*; and as *knowing nothing* **. Where it is plainly intimated, that the Faith of the true Chriſtian Teachers and Apoſtles

* 1 Cor. x. 15. xiv. 20. Eph. v. 17. 1 Theſſ. v. 21.
† 1 Pet. iii. 15. || Tit. i. 9. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.
** 1 Tim. i. 7. vi. 4.

was joined with Underſtanding; they underſtood what they believed and what they taught; and the contrary was the Reproach of the falſe Teachers, whereby they were to be diſtinguiſhed from the true.

And now I think, upon an impartial View of theſe ſeveral Paſſages, to which many others might be added, if it were neceſſary, it appears with the greateſt Evidence, that the Method the Apoſtles made uſe of, as their Lord and Maſter had done before them, to bring Perſons to the Faith of the Goſpel, was by aſſiduous Inſtruction, at the ſame time producing the moſt illuſtrious Credentials of their Divine Miſſion. Neither Chriſt nor his Apoſtles ever required Perſons to believe without Evidence ſufficient to make their Aſſent rational. Nor is it true, as this Writer repreſents it, that the firſt Publiſhers of Chriſtianity never *diſputed* or *reaſoned* with thoſe whom they expected to convert to the Faith of Chriſt; on the contrary it appears with the cleareſt Evidence from the Paſſages already produced, that it was their uſual way to reaſon with Men, in order to convert them to the Faith. If they did not diſpute according to the artificial Method of the Schools, yet they always uſed Arguments ſufficient to induce a reaſonable Aſſent; and to convince thoſe whom they required to believe. They reaſoned with the Heathens concerning the Abſurdity of their Idolatry, *Acts* xiv. 15—18. xvii. 22—31. With the *Jews* and Proſelytes of the Gate they reaſoned out of the Holy Scriptures; and both before *Jews* and *Gentiles* they laid the ſtrongeſt Evidence to engage

engage them to believe, ariſing from what Chriſt himſelf had done, his holy Life, his illuſtrious Miracles, and eſpecially his Reſurrection from the Dead, and the extraordinary Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt, of which they were Witneſſes. And God confirmed their Teſtimony by the many glorious Miracles they performed in the Name of a riſen *Jeſus*, and by the Gifts of the Spirit with which they were endued. And theſe together formed an Evidence ſtrong and convincing, an Evidence perfectly agreeable to Reaſon, and the common Senſe of Mankind, and which was much quicker in its Operations than a tedious Proceſs of abſtracted Reaſonings could have been. Upon the whole it is manifeſt, that the Apoſtles had no worldly Advantages of any kind to recommend them. It was by force of Evidence, the Purity and Excellency of their Doctrine, the Holineſs of their Lives, their unſhaken Conſtancy and Zeal in profeſſing the Truth, and the many illuſtrious Proofs they gave of their Divine Miſſion, that they prevailed with thoſe who were willing impartially to conſider their Doctrine, and the Proofs whereby it was atteſted. It was by Argument, and the glorious convincing Evidence with which it was accompanied, that Chriſtianity made ſuch an amazing Progreſs; to which the *Jews* at firſt, and the Heathens afterwards, had little to oppoſe beſides bitter Calumnies, Reproaches, and Perſecutions.

And now it may be ſafely left to any Man of common Underſtanding to compare this Account with that given by this Writer, and ſee which of them is moſt agreeable to Truth and Candour, and

to

to the ſacred Records. But tho' this general Anſwer might be ſufficient, it will be proper to enter into a particular Diſcuſſion of the ſeveral Things produced by him to ſhew that our Saviour and his Apoſtles never appealed to the Underſtandings of Men, and that they required them to believe without Reaſon or Evidence. I am apprehenſive this Part of my Remarks will prove tedious to you, as it has been to myſelf. For to be obliged to detect a Succeſſion of groſs Miſrepreſentations, and to conſider a great Variety of Paſſages, which have little Connexion with one another, leads one into a Detail that yields little Entertainment, either to the Writer or to the Reader.

He firſt aſks, " Did our Saviour lay the Argu-
" ments and Proofs of his Miſſion frankly before
" his Diſciples, and then give them time to con-
" ſider calmly of their Force, and Liberty to de-
" termine thereon as their Reaſon ſhould direct
" them?" If his Meaning be, that our Saviour, after laying the Proofs of his Miſſion before his Diſciples, ſhould have left them entirely at liberty to receive or reject him as they thought fit; I readily own, that he did not do this. For what could be more abſurd, than firſt to lay before them the evident Proofs that he was ſent from God for the moſt important Purpoſes, and then let them know that they might with equal Innocence receive or reject him? But the Method he took was the wiſeſt and propereſt that could be, and ſuch as left room for Deliberation and thorough Conviction. He gave his Diſciples many Opportunities of converſing with him, and hearing his admirable

rable Diſcourſes, and of obſerving the Holineſs of his Life, the Excellency of his Doctrine, and the many wonderful Works he performed, Works far tranſcending all human Power. And it was not till above a Year after their firſt coming to him, and after they had all the Opportunities that could be deſired of being inſtructed, and fully ſatisfied of his divine Miſſion, that he ſolemnly called the twelve to be his Apoſtles. And it was again a conſiderable time after this, that he ſent them forth to preach in his Name; and the Powers he then gave them of performing the moſt illuſtrious Miracles, muſt needs have been an additional mighty Confirmation of their Faith in him. And after this his Reſurrection from the Dead, of which they were convinced by *many infallible Proofs*, and the farther Inſtructions he then gave them; his Aſcenſion into Heaven, of which they were Eye-Witneſſes; the extraordinary Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt, and the miraculous Powers and ſpiritual Gifts with which they were endued, according to his own Prediction and Promiſe; all this taken together, rendered the Evidence compleat, and fully convinced them that *Chriſt* was the divine Perſon he profeſſed himſelf to be, and that the Religion he taught was from God. And this Evidence they laid before others, as ſufficient to convince them too.

But our Author farther urges, that *Chriſt* "did "but ill approve the being called on upon any Oc- "caſion to explain himſelf, and therefore his Diſ- "ciples were fearful at every turn of giving of- "fence, and incurring Reproof by any farther "Enquiry,

" Enquiry, even at times when they did not really " apprehend his Meaning *." This is ſo far from being true, that on the contrary, it is manifeſt from the Accounts given by the Evangeliſts, that he encouraged them to aſk him for Information, and ſhewed himſelf well pleaſed when they did ſo. And ſo forward was he to inform them, that he took occaſion to explain Things to them even without their aſking †. The only Paſſage that ſeems to give the leaſt countenance to this Pretence is, that when he *taught his Diſciples, and ſaid, that the Son of Man is to be delivered into the Hands of Men, and they ſhall kill him, and after that he is killed, he ſhall riſe the third Day*; we are told, *they underſtood not that Saying, and were afraid to aſk him* ‖. But all that can be gather'd from this is, not that *Chriſt* was unwilling to inform them; for the Inſtructions he then gave them were as plain as Words could be, that he was to ſuffer, and die, and riſe again; or that they were in general afraid to apply to him for explaining himſelf; but that with regard to that particular Subject, the Sufferings of the Meſſiah, they were under the Power of the ſtrongeſt Prejudices; and that it was a thing ſo contrary to their Notions and Expectations, that they were loth to believe and hear of it. And accordingly, St. *Matthew* ſpeaking of the ſame thing, tells us, they were *exceeding ſorry* **. They would all have been willing to explain themſelves, as *Peter* had done on a former occaſion, who underſtood what our Lord had

* P. 37. † Matt. xiii. 18, 36, 37, 51. Mark iv. 34. Mat. xvi. 6—12. John xvi. 18, 19, &c. ‖ Mark ix. 31, 32. Luke ix. 45. ** Matt. xvii. 23.

had ſaid well enough, which was exceeding plain, but could not reconcile it to his own Notions, *Far be it from thee, Lord, this ſhall not be unto thee.* But as they knew the Rebuke that had been given to *Peter*, they were afraid of making any farther Enquiries on a Subject ſo ungrateful to them.

As our Author thinks proper to repreſent our Saviour as unwilling to inform his own Diſciples, when they deſired it, ſo he obſerves, "That he ſighed deeply at the Perverſeneſs of "the *Phariſees* in aſking a *Sign*, i. e. ſome "Teſtimonial of the Truth of his declared Miſ"ſion, and ſtiled them a fooliſh and perverſe "Generation for their Preſumption; tho' if he "had appealed to their Underſtanding, it had "been ſo far from being criminal, that it had "been their indiſpenſable Duty *." And he is ſo fond of this Inſtance, that he has it over again, *p.* 49. But our Saviour well knew that their demanding a Sign did not proceed from a teachable Diſpoſition, or an honeſt Openneſs to Conviction, (in which caſe he would certainly have encouraged it) but from a petulant cavilling Temper of Mind, which therefore he juſtly reproved. And what ſufficiently ſhew'd this was, that they called for a Sign from him, after he had for a conſiderable time wrought, and was then working a great number of illuſtrious Miracles, of many of which the *Phariſees* themſelves had been Eye-Witneſſes, and had moſt

* P. 38.

perverſely attributed them to the Aſſiſtance of *Beelzebub* the Prince of the Devils: and when after all this they came and aſked of him a Sign, as if he had not wrought any Miracles among them before, juſtly did he ſhew a Reſentment of ſuch Perverſeneſs. But tho' he did not think fit at that time to gratify their peeviſh Demands, or to humour a Temper that is never ſatisfied with preſent Evidence, but is always unreaſonably demanding more; yet after this he ſtill continued in the moſt open manner, and in the view of his Enemies themſelves, to perform the moſt ſtupendous Miracles, and which were really as great as they themſelves could have deſired; and at that very time he referred them to that which was to be the ultimate confirming Evidence of his divine Miſſion, his own Reſurrection from the Dead; which was attended and followed with ſuch Circumſtances, as rendered it in the propereſt ſenſe what the *Phariſees* demanded, *a Sign from Heaven.*

It is with the ſame Candour, that this Gentleman repreſents our Saviour as *rejecting ſome Perſons immediately*, becauſe they did not believe at once, and as *giving them up inſtantly to the Hardneſs of their Hearts without remedy, depriving them judicially even of the moſt common Advantages——He did not many mighty Works there, becauſe of their Unbelief, which rather ſhould have been the reaſon of his multiplying them.* The Inſtance he here refers to, is our Saviour's Conduct towards his own Countrymen

men of *Nazareth*. And on this occaſion he gives out ſome Inſinuations againſt the *long-ſuffering Character* of the bleſſed *Jeſus*, as if it were very *ſevere to reprobate by ſo ſhort a Proceſs for Heſitation, thoſe whom perhaps ſome additional Circumſtance of Power had brought to a proper Temper and Obedience* *. It appears from the whole of *Chriſt*'s Behaviour during the Courſe of his perſonal Miniſtry, how patient and long-ſuffering he was. He went about teaching and preaching the Things of the Kingdom of God, notwithſtanding the Oppoſition and ill Treatment he met with, ſtill repeating his excellent Inſtructions and beneficent Miracles, and with great Tenderneſs bearing with their Obſtinacy and Perverſeneſs. How admirably does he expreſs this Temper, in thoſe pathetical Words, *Oh Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem,——how often would I have gathered thy Children together, as a Hen doth gather her Brood under her Wings, but ye would not!* † We may be ſure therefore, that his Conduct towards the People of *Nazareth* was not owing to any want of *Long-ſuffering*; and that if a *tardy Genius* and *innocent Scruples*, as this Writer phraſes it, had been the only Impediments, our Lord would have continued to indulge a *patient Attendance*. But it muſt be conſidered, that the firſt time he went to preach among them, which was after his Fame had ſpread throughout all *Galilee*, they attempted to murder him ‖. Notwithſtanding which, he

* P. 66, 67. † Luke xiii. 34. ‖ Luke iv. 14, 16, 29.

went again a conſiderable time after, when the Fame of his great Wiſdom and Miracles was ſtill better eſtabliſhed, and he did then perform ſome mighty Works among them. But inſtead of being duly affected with his excellent Diſcourſes and with his Miracles, they only reflected on the Meanneſs of his Parentage and worldly Circumſtances *. And therefore his not performing many mighty Works among them was owing to the juſt Knowledge he had of their irreclaimable Obſtinacy, which both might be gathered from their Conduct, and which he was well aſſured of, as he had the power of diſcerning the Spirits of Men. For, as the Evangeliſt obſerves, *he needed not that any ſhould teſtify of Man: for he knew what was in Man* †.

If *Chriſt* ordered his Diſciples to *ſhake off the Duſt of their Feet, as a Teſtimony* againſt a City that would not *receive* them, or *hearken to* them (which is another thing our Author refers to ‖,) it was not his intention they ſhould do it, till after having tried all proper Methods, and till it appeared they were plainly incorrigible. So the Apoſtles underſtood and practiſed his Directions. *Paul* and *Barnabas ſhook off the Duſt of their Feet* againſt the *Jews* at *Antioch* in *Piſidia*; but it was not till after they not only *contradicted* and *blaſphemed*, but *ſtirred up the chief Men of the City, and raiſed Perſecution againſt* Paul *and* Barnabas, *and expelled them out of their Coaſts* **.

Another

* Matt. xiii. 54—58. Mark vi. 2, 3. † Joh. ii. 25. ‖ P. 39.
** Acts xiii. 45, 50, 51.

Another Inſtance we have with regard to the *Jews* at *Corinth*: *Paul ſhook his Raiment, and ſaid unto them, your Blood be upon your own Heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the* Gentiles. But this was not, till after he had for a conſiderable time together *reaſoned in the Synagogue every Sabbath*; and they not only *oppoſed themſelves*, but *blaſphemed*, i. e. manifeſted ſuch a malicious and ſpiteful Oppoſition, breaking forth into Reproaches and Blaſphemies againſt the Name of *Jeſus*, that it plainly appeared, it was in vain to ſtrive with them any longer. He therefore choſe that way of teſtifying that he had diſcharged his Duty, and that the Guilt would be chargeable only upon themſelves *.

But what this Gentleman ſeems to lay the principal ſtreſs upon is, that our Saviour required Perſons to believe in an Inſtant, before any Evidence given. To this purpoſe he obſerves, that it was his Language before he wrought his Miracles, *Believe ye that I am able to do this?* "The Conviction was to precede the Evidence, "as the Terms of the Favour to be conſequent-"ly conferred †." The Caſe where our Lord uſed theſe Expreſſions, is that of the two blind Men that came to him, ſaying, *Thou Son of* David (a Character by which the Meſſiah was then uſually diſtinguiſhed) *have mercy upon us.* This Confeſſion they made voluntarily without his requiring it, and it was undoubtedly founded upon

* Acts xviii. 4, 5, 6. † P. 37, 49, 50.

upon what they had heard of his illuſtrious Miracles and wiſe Diſcourſes, the Fame of which had ſpread abroad through all *Judea* and *Galilee*. It was therefore with great Propriety that our Saviour put that Queſtion to them, *Believe ye that I am able to do this?* And upon their declaring they did, *touched their Eyes and ſaid, According to your Faith be it unto you* *. This was not a requiring thoſe to believe who did not believe before, and that in an Inſtant and without Evidence, as this Writer is pleaſed to repreſent it; but it was an approving the Faith they already had, and a giving farther Evidence to confirm and eſtabliſh it. And in general, it holds true with regard to every Caſe recorded in the Goſpel, in which *Chriſt* required thoſe that came to him to be healed, to declare their Belief in him, that they were Perſons that had ſome Faith in him before. And the Deſign of his requiring them to believe was in effect no more than this, to engage them to make a Profeſſion of their Faith before others, or to encourage them to perſiſt in believing, when he ſaw their Faith began to ſtagger thro' extraordinary Difficulties and Trials; as in the caſe of *Jairus*, and the Father of the young Man whom the Diſciples could not relieve †. And then upon their declaring they believed, he wrought his Miracles upon them, the more ſignificantly to ſhew, what this Gentleman thinks fit to deny, that his Miracles were deſigned and wrought as Proofs of

* Matt. ix. 27, 28, 29. † Mark v. 36. ix. 23, 24.

of his divine Miſſion. And this alſo is the deſign of thoſe Expreſſions he ſometimes makes uſe of, after he had wrought the miraculous Cure; *Thy Faith hath ſaved thee*; *thy Faith hath made thee whole.* He hereby ſignified his Approbation of the Faith they had ſhewn, and directed their Views to that which was the main Deſign of his Miracles, *viz.* to confirm their Faith in him, and bear teſtimony to his Miſſion. And yet it is far from being true, what this Gentleman expreſſly affirms, that our Saviour *conſtantly ſtipulated for no ordinary degree of Perſuaſion beforehand*; from whence he infers, that they *owed the whole Efficacy of their Cure to their Faith.* For nothing is more certain than that with regard to the far greater part of the Miracles he wrought he did not ſtipulate for Faith beforehand. Inſtances of which ſee referred to in the Margin, to which many more might eaſily be added *. This ſhews how little credit is due to a Writer that is capable of endeavouring to impoſe ſo palpable a Falſhood upon his Reader, even when he pretends to give an exact and faithful Narrative of our Saviour's Proceedings.

The Inſtance he mentions, p. 65. of our Saviour's Command to *Matthew* to *follow* him, is not an Inſtance of a Command to a Man that did not believe before, to believe in an Inſtant, and without Evidence; but of a Command to a Man

* John v. 12, 13, 14. John ix. 6, 7, 11. Matt. xii. 13. Luke vii. 13, 14. xiv. 2, 4. xxii. 5.

Man that already believed, to follow him as one of his immediate Diſciples and Attendants. Nor is it true, that *Matthew precipitately deſerted a beneficial Employment for he knew not whom.* For he well knew who *Jeſus* was, as he lived at *Capernaum*, where Chriſt chiefly had his Reſidence, and performed many of his mighty Works, and delivered many of his excellent Diſcourſes. Our Author ſeems aware of this, and therefore urges, "That it is likely, if "what he had ſeen before had diſpoſed him to "Diſcipleſhip, he would have had the Merit "of engaging voluntarily in the Service, with-"out waiting for a particular Addreſs." But this does not follow. Suppoſing him ever ſo well diſpoſed, he might queſtion, whether, as he was a Publican, Chriſt would take him among the number of thoſe Diſciples that were conſtantly to attend him, conſidering the common Prejudices againſt Perſons of that Character. But when he heard Chriſt himſelf particularly calling him to follow him, he gladly accepted the Invitation, and preferred the being his conſtant Attendant to his gainful Employment. There is nothing in all this but what may reaſonably be accounted for.

As to the Inſtance of the *Samaritans, who it ſeems had never heard of Chriſt before, and yet believed on him readily for the Saying* of the Woman: *A notable Foundation truly for Confidence and Conviction, and perhaps for Martyrdom!*

tyrdom! * In this caſe, there is no Command of our Saviour enjoining the *Samaritans* to believe. The Fact only is related, that they did believe. Nor is this their believing to be underſtood of a complete and perfect Faith, as our Author is pleas'd to repreſent it in this, and all the other Caſes he mentions. It is evident to any one that is acquainted with the Language of the New Teſtament, that Believing is there frequently to be underſtood of a Faith but juſt begun, and which was as yet very imperfect, and far from being well eſtabliſhed †. So it is to be underſtood, when it is ſaid of ſome of the *Samaritans*, that they *believed on him for the Saying of the Woman.* The Account ſhe gave them of his having diſcovered to her the moſt ſecret Tranſactions of her Life, as well as of his wiſe and excellent Diſcourſe, inclined them to believe in him. This was the firſt occaſion, or beginning of their believing. But their Faith was afterwards mightily confirmed, and received great Acceſſions from their perſonal Converſation with him, and the admirable Inſtructions he gave them in a manner far exceeding whatever they had heard before. This added to the Proof he had given of a wonderful and ſupernatural Knowledge, led them to conclude, that he was the Chriſt, whom they, as well as the *Jews*, were then in ſtrong Expectation of. And they ſeem to have had juſter Notions of the

* P. 66. † John ii. 23, 24. vi. 66. vii. 31. Acts viii. 13.

Deſign of the Meſſiah's coming than the *Jews* themſelves, and not to have been ſo intoxicated with the Notions of his temporal Glory and Grandeur, as appears from their calling him the *Saviour of the World*; and from the Declaration made by the Woman, *I know that Meſſiah cometh, when he is come, he will tell us all Things.*

But if our Saviour had not required Men to believe inſtantly, and without giving them time for Deliberation, would he have called his Diſciples *Fools, and ſlow of heart to believe! becauſe a Narrative of four Hours had not wrought a thorough Conviction* *? The Paſſage here referred to is in *Luke* xxiv. 25. with regard to which it muſt be conſidered, that the Perſons our Saviour here reproves were of the number of thoſe Diſciples that conſtantly attended him. And what he reproves them for, was their not underſtanding that Chriſt *ought to ſuffer* before he *entred into his Glory.* This was not the firſt time he had propoſed theſe ſacred Truths to them; he had done it at ſeveral times before in the plaineſt manner †. He had juſt reaſon therefore to reproach them for their *Fooliſhneſs* or *Inconſideration*, for that is the proper Signification of the Word there uſed, and their *Slowneſs*; which was not owing to a natural Defect in their Underſtanding, but to their culpable Prejudices, and to a Neglect of improving the Inſtructions that had been given them.

* P. 66. † Matt. xvi. 21. xvii. 22, 23. xx. 17, 18, 19.

them. And now again after his Reſurrection he took pains to *open* to them *the Scriptures*, and make them *underſtand* them, ver. 27, 32. which would have been needleſs, if, as this Gentleman inſinuates, Believing had nothing to do with the Underſtanding.

Our Author mentions ſome other Inſtances of ſudden Converſions, which relate not directly to the time of our Saviour, but of his Apoſtles, to ſhew that they alſo required Men to believe in an inſtant, without any *Conceſſions of Time for Deliberation.* Thus he obſerves, that the "Eunuch was the Proſelyte of a ſhort Stage, "inſtructed in one Hour, and baptized the "next." p. 39. But ſuppoſing what is very probable, that the Eunuch had heard a great deal at *Jeruſalem*, from whence he was then returning, concerning *Jeſus*, and the Miracles wrought by him; and after his Death by his Diſciples, who teſtified that he was riſen from the dead, and confirmed their Teſtimony by the moſt illuſtrious Atteſtations, he might be well prepared for Inſtruction. And when things were more diſtinctly explained to him by *Philip*, and the Eunuch's Prejudices were removed, by convincing him from that Prophecy in *Iſaiah*, that the Meſſiah was to undergo many and grievous Sufferings; the Suddenneſs of his Converſion is very conſiſtent with his having a rational Conviction of the Truth of our Saviour's Miſſion. It was to his Underſtanding that *Philip* addreſs'd himſelf, *Underſtandeſt thou*

what thou readeſt? Nor did he, after inſtructing him, require him to believe without delay; but the Eunuch himſelf made the Propoſal to be baptized, and voluntarily declared his Belief, that *Jeſus Chriſt* was *the Son of God.*

But perhaps it is more to the Author's purpoſe, what he obſerves, that "whole Congregations were often gained over at a hearing, "and Thouſands at a time actually convinced "by a ſingle Lecture." I ſuppoſe, he particularly refers to the three thouſand that were converted at St. *Peter*'s firſt Sermon on the Day of Pentecoſt. And it muſt be acknowledg'd, that this is very remarkable; but no Proof that their Faith was not reaſonable, or without ſufficient convincing Evidence. Let us take the caſe as it really was in all its Circumſtances. It was well known to the *Jews* that *Jeſus* had performed among them for ſome Years together the moſt aſtoniſhing Miracles; for the Truth of which St. *Peter* here appeals to themſelves, as Facts that could not be conteſted. They knew his holy Life, and had heard his wiſe and excellent Diſcourſes, and a conſiderable number of them had from time to time been brought to believe *, tho' their Faith was far from being well eſtabliſhed. And after he had been ſeized and condemned by the Authority of their great Council, many of them were prevailed upon by the chief Prieſts, Rulers, and Phariſees, to conſent

* See to this purpoſe John ii. 23. vii. 31, 40, 41. x. 41. 42. xi. 45. Luke vii. 16. Matt. xxi. 46.

ſent to his being crucified, which St. *Peter* therefore charges home upon them as their Guilt. They had afterwards been Witneſſes to the preternatural Darkneſs, the Earthquake, and other extraordinary things that happened at his Crucifixion, and which made a mighty Impreſſion on many of the People *. They knew that his Diſciples teſtified that he was riſen again from the dead, and they themſelves were now Witneſſes of the wonderful Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt upon his Diſciples, and were convinced, by what they heard and ſaw, of the Truth and Reality of it, and that it was a thing which far exceeded all human Power, and carried in it the ſtrongeſt Evidences of a divine Interpoſition. This ſatisfied them, that the Teſtimony the Apoſtles gave of Chriſt's Reſurrection and Exaltation was true, and that therefore he was the promiſed Saviour; eſpecially as the Apoſtle *Peter* ſhewed that all this was perfectly agreeable to the Predictions of the Prophets concerning him. In ſuch an extraordinary Concurrence of Circumſtances the Conviction wrought upon them was ſpeedy, but very reaſonable, and founded upon ſufficient Evidence. The ſame Obſervation may be made with regard to the Numbers that were converted afterwards on occaſion of another Diſcourſe of St. *Peter*. They had juſt ſeen a moſt aſtoniſhing Miracle performed by *Peter* and *John* in reſtoring a Man whom they all knew to have been lame from his Mother's Womb,

* Luke xxiii 47, 48.

Womb, by only bidding him in the Name of *Jeſus* riſe up and walk: No wonder that this, together with the Apoſtle's excellent Diſcourſe, added to what had ſo lately happened at the day of Pentecoſt, which was then freſh in memory, and to what they obſerv'd concerning the exemplary Lives, the Piety and Charity of the firſt Believers, brought over to the Faith many that probably were very favourably diſpoſed before; but were now, by this additional Evidence, fully convinced. Beſides all which, we may well ſuppoſe there was an extraordinary Preſence and Influence of the Holy Spirit upon the Minds of Men, communicated for the more ſpeedy and effectual ſpreading of the Goſpel at its firſt Publication; and which was a farther illuſtrious Proof of its divine Original, and of the Approbation of Heaven. Upon the whole, all that can be juſtly concluded from the numerous and ſudden Converſions at the firſt Publication of the Goſpel, is not that Chriſtianity is not founded on Argument, or that the firſt Believers had no Reaſon or Evidence for their believing; but that the Evidence was ſo ſtrong and convincing, and came upon them with ſuch an over-powering Light and Force, as made a much quicker Progreſs than mere abſtracted ſubtil Reaſonings would have done. For it proceeded upon Facts of the moſt extraordinary nature, obvious and convincing, even to the meaneſt Capacities; and from whence the Inference was eaſy and natural, that *Jeſus* and the Apoſtles

Apoſtles were ſent from God, and that God bare witneſs to their Doctrine. But then it muſt be conſidered, that tho' the Goſpel continued to make a wonderful Progreſs throughout the World by the force of the Evidence with which it was accompanied, yet it was principally at firſt, and in *Jeruſalem*, that we read of ſuch numbers converted in ſo ſhort a time to the Chriſtian Faith. For there were many Circumſtances there concurring to it, which did not meet to ſuch advantage in other places. It had been the Scene of Chriſt's Miracles, Sufferings, Reſurrection, and the extraordinary Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt; and there were many there that had been Witneſſes to what Chriſt had ſaid and done, and who had been in his Life-time well-diſpoſed to believe in him, tho' afterwards ſcandalized by his Sufferings; and therefore were the more eaſily wrought upon by the manifeſt Demonſtrations of his Divine Power and Glory after his Aſcenſion. And certainly the Evidence muſt have been very ſtrong, which could engage ſuch numbers in *Jeruſalem* itſelf to acknowledge him for the Meſſiah, who had been but a little before ſo ignominiouſly crucified there, after having been condemned as an Impoſtor by the chief Men of their Nation, and by their great Sanhedrim, for whoſe Deciſions they had all had the profoundeſt Veneration.

I have now conſidered the account this Gentleman is pleas'd to give us of the *Proceedings* of

of our bleſſed Lord and his Apoſtles in *planting the Goſpel*, and from which he pretends to prove, that there was *no Appeal to the Underſtanding ever made or intended*; and that they commanded Men to believe at once, without offering any Reaſon or Evidence to ingage them to believe. He himſelf is ſenſible, that there is one obvious Objection lies againſt his Account, and that is, that the Miracles wrought by Chriſt and his Apoſtles were deſigned as Evidence to ingage Men to believe; and to take away the force of this he endeavours to ſhew,

That it was not the Meaning or Intention of Chriſt himſelf to prove his own divine Miſſion by his Miracles; and that they were in themſelves no way fitted to be ſuch Proofs and Evidences.

As to the firſt of theſe, it is certainly a very extraordinary Attempt to undertake to ſhew from the Goſpel-Hiſtory, that Chriſt had no Intention to prove his divine Miſſion by his Miracles, when he himſelf in the moſt expreſs terms imaginable declares, that this was one principal Intention of them, and refers both the Jews and his own Diſciples to thoſe Miracles, as the ſtrongeſt Atteſtations to the Divinity of his Miſſion, ſufficient to convince them that he came from God, and to render them inexcuſable if they did not believe in him; concerning which ſee above, *p.* 7.

Part of what our Author here urges, is what he had ſaid before, and which has been already conſidered,

conſidered, concerning our Saviour's reproving the Phariſees for aſking a Sign, and concerning his previouſly requiring Faith from thoſe upon whom he wrought his Miracles.

Other things that he offers here are ſo weak, that it would be honouring them too far to enter into a laborious Confutation of them. Thus he argues, that our Saviour did not intend his Miracles as Proofs of his divine Miſſion, becauſe he did not gratify *Herod* in working a Miracle before him at the time of his Paſſion; as if a Man of *Herod*'s Character were diſpoſed in thoſe Circumſtances to become his Diſciple, though not long before, upon being aſſured of the Miracles Chriſt wrought in *Galilee*, he deſigned to have murdered him *. He argues the ſame thing from our Saviour's refuſing to ſuffer the evil Spirits whom he ejected to bear witneſs to him as the Chriſt; and if he had readily accepted their Teſtimony, his Adverſaries would probably have improved it to give countenance to that blaſphemous Calumny they had raiſed againſt him, that he was in confederacy with thoſe evil Spirits.

It would be ſomething more to his purpoſe, if it were true, that Chriſt *was remarkably upon the Reſerve, whenever he happened to be among unbelieving Company, and that he was particularly ſparing of thoſe ſuppoſed Arguments*, viz. his Miracles, *amongſt the very Perſons who ſeemed moſt to want them.* I know no inſtance

* See Luke xi. 7. xiii. 31, 32.

in the Goſpel-Hiſtory that gives the leaſt Countenance to this Surmize, but our Saviour's Conduct towards the Men of *Nazareth*, which has been already accounted for. But if he would inſinuate, that our Lord never wrought his Miracles before Unbelievers, nothing can be more falſe. It may be ſaid of his Miracles in general, that they were wrought in the ſight of Perſons who at firſt did not believe in him, but many of whom were brought to believe by thoſe Miracles *. The Scribes and Phariſees were his bittereſt Enemies, and theſe were often preſent when he performed his mighty Works, nor did he decline working his Miracles before them, even when he knew they had a Deſign to obſerve and intrap him. Inſtances of which ſee *Matt.* xii. 10, 14. *Mark* xi. 5—12. ix. 14—27. We are expreſsly told, ſpeaking of the unbelieving Jews, that Jeſus *did many Miracles* before them; *John* xii. 37. And he himſelf frequently in his Diſcourſes with his Enemies appeals to his wonderful Works, as things which they all knew and could not poſſibly deny, and inſiſts upon them as unconteſted Proofs of his divine Miſſion.

Our Author further argues from Chriſt's enjoining thoſe on whom he wrought his Miracles not to divulge them. *See thou tell no Man* (ſays he) *was generally the Charge.* But this alſo is very unfairly repreſented. With regard to the far greater part of his Miracles, no ſuch Injunction

* See particularly John ii. 18, 23, 24. iii. 2.

tion was given. It was only on ſome particular Occaſions, for which no doubt there were ſpecial Reaſons. It is eaſy to enumerate all the Inſtances of this kind recorded in the Evangeliſts. Such was the Caſe of the Leper mentioned *Matt.* viii. 2, 4. The two blind Men that addreſs'd to him as *the Son of David*, i. e. the Meſſiah, *Matt.* ix. 27—30. The dumb and deaf Man, *Mark* vii. 36. And the Caſe of *Jairus*'s Daughter, who was raiſed from the dead. In theſe Caſes all the Evangeliſts that relate the Miracles obſerve, that Chriſt forbad the Perſons to divulge them. And there is another Inſtance of this kind, *Matt.* xii. 16. where, after Chriſt had reſtored the Man that had the withered Hand in the ſight of the Phariſees, we are told, he *withdrew himſelf from thence*, and *healed thoſe* that came to him, and *charged them that they ſhould not make him known.* With regard to the Caſe laſt mentioned, the Reaſon of the Injunction is plain; it was becauſe the Phariſees were at that time *taking counſel with the Herodians* how they might *deſtroy him*, as appears from Ver. 14. As to the Caſe of the Leper whom he had cleanſed, it is to be obſerved, that the divulging of the Miracle brought ſuch Multitudes together, that *Jeſus could no more openly enter into the City, but was without in deſart Places* for a while. And it was probably becauſe our Saviour foreſaw this Inconvenience, that he forbad him to publiſh it abroad. To which it may be added, that as the People

had on ſome Occaſions ſhewn a forwardneſs to make him a King, he ſometimes found it neceſſary to withdraw, that he might give no occaſion to Tumult or Sedition; and when he knew any particular Miracle he wrought was likely to have that Effect, he forbad it to be divulged. And this alſo probably might be one Reaſon why he charged his Diſciples not to make known his Transfiguration, and ſometimes forbad them to publiſh that he was the Chriſt, the full Notification of which was reſerved till after his Sufferings and Reſurrection, when there was no longer any Danger of it's producing that Effect. But though we could not at this Diſtance aſſign the preciſe Reaſons why our Lord at ſome particular times enjoined them not to divulge what he had done; yet this we are ſure of, that the Reaſon could not be that he did not intend his Miracles as Proofs of his divine Miſſion, ſince he frequently in the moſt ſolemn manner appealed to them as Proofs.

But what this Writer ſeems to lay a particular Streſs upon, is that which our Saviour ſaid, when applied to for his extraordinary Aſſiſtance in favour of the Nobleman's Child, *Unleſs you ſee Signs and Wonders, you will not believe.* But what is this deſigned to prove? Is it to prove, that Chriſt in working his Miracles had no Intention that his Miracles ſhould be regarded as Proofs of his divine Miſſion? This indeed is what this Gentleman produces it for; but the contrary

contrary rather follows from it. For if he knew the Jews would not believe without Miracles, and if it was his Deſire and Deſign that they ſhould believe in him, which will ſcarce be denied, this made it neceſſary for him to work Miracles before them with this very View, that they might be thereby brought to believe in him. But it will be ſaid, that our Saviour here reproves the Jews for not believing in him without Miracles. But neither could this be his Intention; ſince he himſelf declares, that if he had not done *Works among them which no other Man did, they had not had Sin.* But what he deſigns here to reprove is the Temper of thoſe, who though they had ſufficient Evidence of his Miracles from Teſtimony that might be ſafely depended on, yet would not believe in him, except they themſelves ſaw them with their own Eyes. This ſeems to have been the Caſe of this Nobleman. We are told *John* iv. 45. that the *Galileans* who had been at the Feaſt at *Jeruſalem* and had *ſeen* the Miracles Chriſt had done there, *received* him upon his Return into *Galilee.* This Nobleman had not been there, but had been informed of all this; and when he heard that *Jeſus was come into Galilee, he went and beſought him that he would come down and heal his Son.* He was in hope that Chriſt might heal his Son, if he *came down* and touched him, but not otherwiſe. His Faith ſeems to have been very imperfect, probably becauſe he himſelf

himſelf had not ſeen any of the mighty Works Chriſt had wrought, though he had ſufficient Reaſon to be aſſured of the Truth of them. Then ſaid Jeſus unto him, *Except ye ſee Signs and Wonders, ye will not believe.* And he did not go down to his Houſe, as he deſired, to heal his Son, but ſaid, *Go thy way, thy Son liveth.* The Nobleman ſeems to have been ſenſible of the Reproof, and *he believed the Word that Jeſus had ſpoken, and went his way.* And upon finding that his Son began to recover *the very Hour that Jeſus ſaid unto him, thy Son liveth, he himſelf believed, with his whole Houſe.* He then fully believed Chriſt's divine Miſſion, of which he had doubted before.

As this Gentleman does what he can to make it appear, that Chriſt himſelf never intended his Miracles as Proofs of his divine Miſſion, ſo he endeavours to ſhew, that in themſelves they are no way fitted to be ſuch Proofs or Evidences.

And firſt, he thinks he may "not unplauſibly "ſuggeſt, what has been ſo often urged upon "this occaſion, that Miracles have, time out of "mind, been undoubtedly performed, as well "in favour of falſe Doctrines, and therefore they "can never be ſingly, and of themſelves alone, "any certain Marks of a true, *p.* 46." He ſpeaks of it here as paſt all doubt, that Miracles have been done in favour of falſe Doctrines, tho' very probably he believes nothing of the matter. For he ſcruples not to call the Popiſh Miracles, which he afterwards mentions, *falſe*

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and fictitious, tho' theſe are as much to be depended on as other Miracles pretended to be wrought in favour of falſe Doctrines. But if he would offer any thing to the purpoſe, in order to run a Parallel between the Atteſtations pretended to be given to any falſe Doctrines, and thoſe given to the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, let him ſhew,

1. That the Miracles wrought or pretended to be wrought in favour of falſe Doctrines, or of Impoſtors, were Works plainly above all the Power or Art of Man to perform. For many wonderful things may be done by human Art or Skill, and a dextrous Application of natural Cauſes, which cannot properly be called Miracles.

2. That theſe things were done, not in a ſingle Inſtance, or in a very few Inſtances, in which caſe there might be ſome Suſpicion of Management; but that there was a Succeſſion of them in many Inſtances, and for a Courſe of Years together.

3. That theſe Miracles were wrought in profeſſed Atteſtation to the Divine Miſſion of the Perſons by whom, or in favour of whom they were wrought, and to the Truth of the Doctrines they delivered. For ſtrange things have happened from time to time in all Ages and Countries, from which no Conſequence can be drawn, as not being wrought in declared Atteſtation to any Doctrines, or to the Divine Miſſion of any Perſons.

4. That they were wrought not in ſecret or before a few only, but in an open publick manner; wrought not merely in favour of the reigning Religion, when a very nice Examination would not be very ſafe; but in favour of a Religion contrary to the moſt inveterate Prejudices, and in the view of ſubtil and malicious Enemies, who had the Power in their hands, and who had all the Opportunities that could be deſired to have detected the Impoſture, if there had been any; and were ſtrongly carried by their Inclinations and Intereſts to do it. And yet were not able upon the moſt diligent Examination to detect Fraud or Impoſture in any one Inſtance, in which caſe it might have induced a Suſpicion of the reſt, that they were all owing to the ſame Cauſes.

5. That the Accounts of theſe Miracles were delivered by Perſons, who themſelves ſaw and knew him, and who by their whole Conduct gave all the Marks of diſintereſted Probity and Sincerity, and perſiſted in their Teſtimony with an unſhaken Conſtancy, without ever falſifying in any one Inſtance, tho' they thereby expoſed themſelves to the moſt grievous Perſecutions and Sufferings.

6. That even ſome of the moſt obſtinate Adverſaries that lived neareſt thoſe Times did not pretend abſolutely to deny the Facts, tho' they endeavoured to attribute them to wrong Cauſes; and that great Numbers of Perſons ſtrongly prejudiced againſt the Religion thus atteſted,

atteſted, embraced it upon the Credit of thoſe miraculous Atteſtations, in oppoſition to their former Prejudices, and to their worldly Intereſts, as well as to their favourite Appetites and Paſſions; and this in the very Age in which the Facts were done, and in Places where they had the beſt Opportunities of enquiring into the Truth of thoſe Facts, and detecting them if they had been falſe *.

* The *Jewiſh* Story concerning *Jeſus*'s performing his wonderful Works by virtue of the ineffable Name which he ſtole out of the Temple and hid in his Thigh, is well known. And many both of the *Jews* and *Heathens* aſcribed his Miracles to his extraordinary Skill in Magick: And among others, *Celſus*, as appears in ſeveral Paſſages of *Origen*'s Work againſt him. All that can be truly gathered from hence is, That the Truth of the miraculous Facts was ſo evident, that they were not able to deny it. For as to the Charge itſelf, it is manifeſtly abſurd and ridiculous, whether we conſider the Nature and Circumſtances of the Works themſelves, or the End for which they were wrought, or the Character of *Jeſus*, and the Nature and Deſign of the Religion he publiſhed to the World.——PLINY obſerves, that never was any Man fonder of *Magick* than NERO, or did more to encourage and countenance it, and that he ſent for the ableſt Maſters of it from all Parts, and yet that never was the Vanity and Falſhood of it more plainly diſcovered than in his Time. *Plin. Hiſt. Nat. Lib.* 30. *Cap.* 2.—— And if the *Favour* and *Encouragement* given to it by a mighty *Emperor* could not hinder the Fallacy of it from being detected; can it be imagin'd, that if the Things done by our *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles*, who had no Authority to countenance them, and ſo many watchful Enemies to obſerve them, had been of no higher kind than *Magical* Operations, the Folly and Impoſture would not have been ſoon detected and expoſed?

If this Writer will pleaſe to produce any falſe Religion that had ſuch Teſtimonials, and to whom all this may be applied, it ſhall be conſidered. In the mean time I affirm, that it is abſolutely out of his power; and that therefore this Part of the Evidence for Chriſtianity ſtands upon a firm and immoveable Baſis; ſince it may be clearly ſhewn, that all the above-mentioned Circumſtances concur in it, in which it can never be equal'd by any falſe Religion. And tho' the Scripture warns us (as he obſerves) of *lying Wonders and falſe Chriſts, and to take the utmoſt care of what we give credit to of this kind*; yet it certainly never ſuppoſes, that any falſe Chriſts ſhould ariſe, who ſhould be able to work ſuch a Succeſſion of glorious Miracles, as were wrought in atteſtation of Chriſtianity.

The wonderful Works wrought by our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* in avowed Confirmation of his divine Miſſion were of ſuch a nature, and ſo manifeſtly tranſcending all the Art and Power of Man, ſuch as the reſtoring periſhed Limbs in a Moment, healing the moſt deſperate Diſeaſes by a Word, commanding the Winds and the Seas, and even raiſing the Dead; that they might be alone ſufficient, as they were circumſtanced, to give a convincing Proof of his divine Miſſion: but they received a wonderful Confirmation by his Reſurrection from the Dead, which he himſelf had foretold, and to which he appealed, and of which there was all the Evidence that could

be reaſonably deſired *. And this was followed and farther confirmed by his Aſcenſion into Heaven in the view of his gazing Diſciples; and both were placed beyond all reaſonable doubt, and received a mighty additional Force, by the extraordinary Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt ſoon after

* Our Author gives a hint, that if our Saviour had but *taken one Turn in the Market-place* after his Reſurrection, this would have been a more effectual Conviction to the *Jews* than all the Evidence that was offered, and *might have ſpared both the painful Lives and Labours of ſo many holy Vouchers, who periſhed merely by the thing's being done in a Corner*, p. 67. But certainly the Proof already given of *Chriſt*'s Reſurrection was a much ſtronger Evidence of it, than merely his taking a Turn or two thro' the Market-Place would have been, before a Croud of People, few of whom could be ſuppoſed to be ſo intimately acquainted with him as to be abſolutely ſure that it was he: or if they had believed that it was like him, they would have been ready to think, as the Diſciples at firſt did, that they *had ſeen a Spirit*, or ſome unaccountable Appearance in his Form and Shape. Whereas, as the Caſe is now circumſtanced, he *ſhewed himſelf alive* after his Reſurrection *by many infallible Proofs*, to Perſons to whom he was perfectly known, and who could not be impoſed upon in this matter. They themſelves were not forward to believe it, till they could no longer doubt of it without renouncing the Teſtimony of all their Senſes. They ſaw him, they handled him, they eat and drank with him, they converſed familiarly with him on many important Subjects for forty Days together. If it had only been the eleven Apoſtles that teſtified this, the Number of the Witneſſes would have been very ſufficient; but there were many others that ſaw him, and converſed with him. And at laſt he *was ſeen*, as St. *Paul* in his firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians* affirms, by *above five hundred at once*, moſt of whom *were alive* when he writ that Epiſtle. It can-

after his Aſcenſion, in conſequence of his own Prediction and Promiſe. And this again was proved to the World by the moſt extraordinary Gifts and Powers abiding with his Diſciples, who went thro' all Nations teaching the things which he had commanded them, and were enabled

not without the greateſt Abſurdity be ſuppoſed, that there ſhould have been a Combination among ſo many Perſons to put an Impoſture upon the World in that matter; or if there had, it is ſcarce poſſible but that it muſt have been detected, and that among ſuch a Number one or other would have been prevail'd upon by Bribes or Threatnings, to diſcover and acknowledge the Impoſture. Whereas they all perſiſted uniformly in their Teſtimony with an unſhaken Conſtancy, and many of them ſealed it with their Blood. But that which gave the moſt remarkable Confirmation to their Teſtimony, and which was never equal'd in any other Caſe, was, that God bore them witneſs by Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, poured forth upon the Diſciples in the Name of a riſen *Jeſus*.

The Story ſet about by the *Jews*, that his Diſciples ſtole him by Night whilſt the Soldiers ſlept, was a plain Acknowledgment that his Body was gone out of the Sepulchre; and ſince it was pretended the Soldiers were aſleep, he might have riſen of himſelf for any thing they could tell to the contrary. But if they had really believed that the Diſciples ſtole him, whilſt a Guard of Soldiers were purpoſely ſet to watch the Body; can it be imagined that they would not have made a ſtrict Enquiry, and have got the Soldiers ſeverely puniſhed for ſo criminal a Neglect of their Duty, which could ſcarce be ſuppoſed without a Combination between them and the Diſciples? Why did they not take pains to ſearch out and ſeize the Diſciples, to confront them with one another, and with the Guards? Why did they not call *Joſeph* of *Arimathea* to an account, to get, if poſſible, to the bottom of the Impoſture, and to ſtifle all Reports of his

enabled for many Years together in the Name and by the Power of a riſen *Jeſus*, to perform the moſt illuſtrious Miracles, ſuch as he himſelf had done whilſt on Earth; all which came in aid

his Reſurrection in the very birth? This is the Method that common Senſe would have directed to in this caſe; and which they would undoubtedly have taken, conſidering how zealous they were in the Cauſe, and that they had the power in their hands. But inſtead of this, all was huddled up; the Centinels were unpuniſhed, their Evidence ſtifled, no farther Enquiry made. And when the Diſciples openly avowed that *Chriſt* was riſen from the Dead, of which they were Witneſſes, they durſt not enter into a particular Diſcuſſion or Examination of that matter, but contented themſelves with commanding them not to ſpeak in his Name, who boldly declared to their faces, that they would do it. In a word, it is plain from their whole Management on this occaſion, that it was not for want of ſufficient Evidence of *Chriſt*'s Reſurrection, that the Rulers of the *Jews* did not believe in him; and that as they were diſpoſed, they would not have acknowledged him as the Meſſiah, whatever other Evidence had been offered; ſo when they could not deny that *Jeſus* had raiſed *Lazarus* from the Dead, inſtead of being convinced by it, they only took counſel how they might deſtroy them both.

But if the Rulers and Body of the *Jewiſh* Nation had believed in a riſen *Jeſus*, and embraced his Religion, would thoſe, who now make their not believing an Argument againſt the Truth of *Chriſt*'s Reſurrection, have been convinced? No. It is probable they would have taken ſtill greater advantage of this, and repreſented it as a national Affair, in which the *Jews* joined out of that Attachment to the Honour and Intereſt of their Nation, for which they were ſo remarkable. Such is the true Spirit of Infidelity, always to find fault with the Evidence that is already offered, and to inſiſt upon ſome other or farther Proof, which if it were granted would be as far from giving ſatisfaction as before.

aid of their Teſtimony, and gave it a force which no other Teſtimony ever had. Here is ſuch a Concurrence of the moſt extraordinary divine Atteſtations, ſuch a Concatenation of Evidences, one ſupporting another, that the Apoſtle had reaſon to ſay to the Chriſtian Converts, that if *an Angel from Heaven* had endeavoured to turn them to *another Goſpel*, they were not to regard him. Where he does not put a Caſe that he ſuppoſed might really happen, but uſes a ſtrong Manner of Expreſſion to ſignify, that no Pretence whatſoever ſhould turn them from a ſteady Adherence to the Goſpel of *Chriſt*. And tho' our Author ſeems to think that an Angel's appearing from Heaven would have been the higheſt Evidence poſſible, *p.* 11. yet I believe any one that impartially conſiders this matter, will be apt to conclude, that the Appearance of a ſingle Angel would have fallen vaſtly ſhort in Strength of Evidence, of that amazing Succeſſion of illuſtrious divine Atteſtations that were given to Chriſtianity; the like to which never was in proof of any falſe Religion, nor can be ſuppoſed to be in conſiſtency with the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of divine Providence. For this would be to lay too great a Temptation in the way of his frail Creatures; ſince we cannot conceive, that ſuppoſing a Revelation really to have come from God, it could have been attended with more illuſtrious confirming Evidences of a divine Original, than all theſe taken together do form. And when to theſe external Atteſtations

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is added the exemplary Purity of the great Founder of this Religion, the excellent Character of his Diſciples, ſo remote from that of Impoſtors, and from all worldly Views and carnal Intereſts; and the Nature and Tendency of the Religion thus atteſted, which is deſigned to reclaim Men from Idolatry, Vice, and Wickedneſs, to the Love of God, to his pure Worſhip, to the Practice of univerſal Holineſs and Virtue, and to the heavenly Mind and Life, it carries the Evidence as far as it can go. For this again furniſhes a new Proof, that as the Miracles were ſuch as vaſtly exceeded all human Power, ſo were they not owing to the Agency of ſuperior evil Beings; ſince it can never be imagined, that they would contribute their Aſſiſtance to the performing ſuch wonderful Things in favour of a Religion ſo directly oppoſite to all their Intereſts, and to the Deſigns evil Beings muſt be ſuppoſed to have in view. And therefore they muſt have been wrought by the immediate Aſſiſtance and Agency of God himſelf, or, which comes to the ſame thing, by the Aſſiſtance of good Beings ſuperior to Man, acting under him, and by his Direction, and who would never have thus given their Atteſtation to Fraud and Impoſture.

There is another thing which the Author offers, *p.* 47. and which he ſeems to deſign as an Argument. I would anſwer it if I underſtood it, but I confeſs I cannot well make ſenſe of it myſelf, nor have met with any body that could.

could. But as far as I am able to apprehend it, the Drift of it ſeems to be this; that ſuch Miracles as were wrought at the firſt Eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity were to be expected as the natural Effects of ſuch a benevolent Religion as the Chriſtian, and therefore could not be Evidences of its Truth and Divinity: As if the ſame wonderful Works might not be both Inſtances of great Benevolence, and the Effects of a divine Power, and conſequently Proofs of a divine Interpoſition. And certainly if any Religion could be ſuppoſed to be of ſuch a nature, as neceſſarily to bring along with it ſuch glorious Effects of a divine Power and Benevolence, this would be a plain Evidence that it came from God.

This Gentleman having made an Attempt to ſhew that Miracles can in no caſe be any Proofs at all, afterwards ſeems willing in his great Liberality to grant, that Miracles might be Evidences to thoſe that actually ſaw them; but he denies they could be Evidences to any other Perſons. He affirms, that they could not be Proofs *even to the Men of that Generation that were not actually and perſonally preſent, when they were done, and that for the ſame evident Reaſon they can be none to us now*; p. 51. He goes on to declaim in many Words after his manner, and all that he urges here depends upon this Principle, that no Accounts of paſt Facts can at all be ſafely depended upon, and that no Man is to believe any thing but what he actually ſees with

with his own Eyes; That *the Teſtimony of Sight is by its Nature an Evidence not to be communicated.*——And *that the Light of Conviction which is thus received can extend no farther than to the Eye-witneſs himſelf, loſt and extinguiſhed the firſt Moment it is offered to be imparted*; p. 52, 53. A way of talking completely ridiculous, and theſe Gentlemen themſelves would eſteem it ſo, if applied to any other Subject. And the Reaſon he gives for it is no leſs ridiculous; that *all the Aſſurance in the World of another's ſeeing can never have an equal Effect upon my Senſes, or make me ſee a Thing where I was not actually preſent.* But tho' no Aſſurance of another Man's ſeeing a thing can make me ſee it, and who ever was ſo abſurd as to pretend it could have that Effect? yet it may lay a juſt Foundation for my believing it, and in ſome Caſes the Aſſurance may be ſo ſtrong, that I can no more reaſonably doubt of it than if I had ſeen it my ſelf.

In oppoſition to all this looſe Harangue, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that if the Miracles originally wrought in Atteſtation of Chriſtianity were Proofs to thoſe that actually ſaw them, then they are Proofs to us too, provided we have Evidence reaſonably ſufficient to convince us, that theſe extraordinary Facts were really done. So that ſtill the Queſtion returns to this, whether we have ſufficient reaſon to think, that the Accounts given us of thoſe Facts are to be depended upon, and that thoſe Facts were really per-

formed. For if ſo, they are as truly Evidences to us of the Truth and Divinity of that Revelation, in Atteſtation of which they were wrought, as they were to thoſe that ſaw them, or lived in the Age in which they were performed. If it be ſaid, none that live in ſucceeding Ages can have the ſame Evidence that thoſe of the firſt had; I anſwer, they cannot have ocular Evidence, and ſo it muſt be ſaid of all paſt Facts, or all Facts done at a diſtance from us; but yet they may have Evidence ſufficient to convince any conſidering Perſon that they were done; and an Evidence ſo ſtrongly cricumſtanced, that no Man can reaſonably deny it, without going upon the above-mentioned Principle, that he cannot ſafely believe any paſt Facts at all, or any thing but what he ſees with his own Eyes. And the Man that is obliged to take refuge here, is driven to as great an Abſurdity as can well be ſuppoſed; and plainly ſhews, that he has nothing reaſonable to ſay againſt the Credit of thoſe Facts. And yet this is the Shift this Writer is plainly reduced to. And this ſeems to be the Principle on which his Infidelity reſts; a manifeſt Proof that it is *not founded* on Reaſon or Argument.

It is on this Principle that he tells us, *p.* 52. That " that Divine Demonſtration to By-" ſtanders, the Voice of God himſelf, *This is* " *my beloved Son*, has been by one intervening " Age dwindled long ſince to human Tradi-" tion. God no longer bears witneſs to his

" Son,

" Son, but Men only bear witneſs to God." This may paſs for a pretty Jingle. The Antitheſis ſounds well enough, between *Men's bearing witneſs*, and *God's bearing witneſs*; but the Reaſoning is poor, and the Sentiment falſe. For if the wonderful Glory of Chriſt at his Transfiguration, and the Voice that then came to him was to be regarded as the Teſtimony of God to his Son in that Age, it is to be regarded as ſuch ſtill, provided we have ſufficient Evidence of the Reality of the Fact; and tho' we ourſelves did not ſee the Glory, nor hear the Voice, yet if we have good reaſon to believe that the Account of thoſe, who themſelves ſaw and heard it, is to be depended on, it ought in all reaſon to have an Influence upon us as really as if we had been preſent ourſelves. For the manner in which we come to know a thing does not alter the caſe; it is ſufficient, if we know it in ſuch a way as to have a reaſonable Conviction that it is true. And it is certain that in many caſes we can no more reaſonably doubt of things which we have by Information from others who ſaw and heard them, than if we ſaw and heard them ourſelves. And particularly it may be ſhewn, and often has been ſhewn with great Strength and Clearneſs, that there never was a Teſtimony more to be depended on than that of the Apoſtles, and firſt Witneſſes of Chriſtianity.

I need not take much notice of what he urges, *p.* 52. and which he backs with the Authority of the *Romiſh* Church, that if Miracles

were *neceſſary* at firſt in *the Infancy of the Goſpel, they are ſo ſtill*, and ought to be continued in the Church. For ſuppoſing the Authority of a divine Revelation ſufficiently confirmed by a Series of the moſt extraordinary divine Atteſtations at its firſt Eſtabliſhment, it would be an idle thing to expect that there ſhould be new Atteſtations and Miracles in every Age. It is ſufficient, that the Accounts of thoſe firſt original Atteſtations are tranſmitted to us in a manner that may be ſafely depended upon. To demand new Signs and Wonders to be continually done before our Eyes, would be perfectly unreaſonable. As juſtly might it be demanded, that all the extraordinary Facts that were done in the firſt Age, in Atteſtation of the Goſpel, ſhould be done over again in every Age. And as one Man, in one Age, and in one Country, hath as much right to expect and demand it as another, all theſe things muſt be repeated in the View, and for the Satisfaction of every ſingle Perſon in every Age, and in every Country. And what a ſtrange Scene of things this would introduce, how unfit and unbecoming the divine Wiſdom, is very evident! At that rate, nothing were to be ſeen but Signs and Wonders; and, by being ſo common, they would ceaſe to be extraordinary, and this very thing would hinder the Effect.

Our Author having endeavoured to ſhew, that our Saviour never appealed to the Underſtandings of Men, or laid before them any Evi-

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dence to convince them of his Divine Miſſion; that his Miracles were no Proofs of this at all, nor were ever intended by him as ſuch; and that the Accounts of them that are tranſmitted to us are not to be depended upon; that is, having endeavoured to remove every thing that could be ſuppoſed to lay a rational Foundation for believing, proceeds, *p.* 56, *&c.* to ſhew what it is that is deſigned in the Goſpel as the true Principle of our Faith; and this he reſolves entirely into the immediate *Revelation* of the Holy Ghoſt *imparted ſeparately and ſupernaturally to every Individual*, as he expreſſes it, *p.* 112. which *irradiates the Souls* of Believers at once, with *an irreſiſtible Light from Heaven, that flaſhes Conviction in a Moment*; and *thus our Faith is compleated in an inſtant, and the moſt perfect and finiſhed Creed produced at once, without any tedious Progreſs in Deductions of our own*; p. 59. This he repreſents as of ſuch a nature, as to render all outward Inſtructions entirely needleſs; ſo that we muſt not be left *to take any the leaſt Part of our Inſtructions from one another.* Nor need we have recourſe to the holy Scriptures, which he calls *Manuſcript Authorities and Paper Revelations*, or *concern our* ſelves at all about the *Credit of ancient Miracles*, or other Facts there recorded *. The Spirit alone is to do all without our own Reaſon, or the

* See the ſeveral Paſſages relating to this laid together in my former Letter, *p.* 11, *&c.* which therefore I need not particularly repeat here.

the Uſe of any Means on our parts. He aſſerts, that this Influence of the Spirit is promiſed to abide with all Chriſtians to the end of the World, to guide them infallibly in all Truth, ſo that they ſhould not be *left liable one Moment to a Poſſibility of Error and Impoſition.* That it is univerſal; it *is the Light which enlightneth every Man that cometh into the World:* That it cauſes Men to *think all alike*; and that on this Scheme alone, Men may be juſtly puniſhed for Hereſy and for Unbelief; ſince this muſt be owing to *a rebellious Oppoſition of the Influence of the Spirit,* and a *wilful* rejecting *his Sollicitations,* and a *Refuſal of his offered Grace.*

But I do not ſee how our Author can conſiſtently talk of Perſons reſiſting the Spirit, or what room there is left upon his Scheme for Unbelief, or for Hereſies at all. For ſince he ſuppoſes this Influence to be an *irreſiſtible Light,* inſtantaneous in its Effects, *infallible* in its Guidance, and the Effect of it to be the completing Faith at once, and infuſing the *whole Creed* in an inſtant, engaging Men to *think all alike,* and freeing them from all *Poſſibility of Error and Impoſition*; and ſince he at the ſame time ſuppoſes this Influence of the Spirit and infallible Inſpiration to be univerſal, imparted to every Individual, and extending to every Man that cometh into the World; it manifeſtly follows, that every Chriſtian, yea, every Man that cometh into the World, is irreſiſtibly enlightned, has his Faith abſolutely completed, is free from

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all Poſſibility of Error, and thinks exactly in all Points of Faith the ſame way with every other Man; and that therefore there can be no Unbelief, no Error, no Hereſy, no Difference of Sentiment among Men or Chriſtians.

Nothing can be more contrary to plain and undeniable Fact, more contradictory in all its Parts, and more evidently ſubverſive of itſelf, than the Scheme here advanced by this Writer. I am ſenſible this Gentleman will be ready to ſneer at the Charge. For undoubtedly he does not intend that the World ſhould look upon it as a thing which he himſelf believes. It is the *true ſcriptural and revealed Account of the Matter*, and the Scripture alone muſt anſwer for it. And therefore the more Contradictions are proved upon his Scheme, the better it will anſwer his Deſign, which is to expoſe Chriſtianity to the Deriſion and Contempt of Mankind.

But if it be made appear, that this is all groſs Miſrepreſentation; that the Account he is pleaſed to give us is as contrary to Scripture, as it is to Reaſon and Common Senſe, then the Contradictions and Abſurdities are to be charged upon the Author himſelf, and he is juſtly accountable for them. And this Attempt of his muſt only paſs for a Proof of his readineſs to take any Methods, how unfair or diſingenuous ſoever, to expoſe the Religion of *Jeſus*.

In order to anſwer his Deſign, he heaps together a number of Texts, without any regard to their particular Meaning and Intention, as they lie in

in the ſacred Writings, and applies them all promiſcuouſly the ſame way. He every where confounds the extraordinary and ordinary Influence of the Holy Spirit; that which was peculiar to the Apoſtles, or to the firſt Age, he applies to Chriſtians in every Age; and if any thing extraordinary was done in ſome particular Caſes, he urges it as if it was deſigned to be the ſtanding Rule in every Caſe. Thus, to ſhew that the Holy Ghoſt *operates without delay, by an irreſiſtible Light from Heaven, that flaſhes Conviction in a moment*; he inſtances in the *happy Metamorphoſis of an officious Perſecutor into as zealous an Apoſtle*; p. 58, 59. But tho' the Converſion of St. *Paul*, taken in all its Circumſtances, was a ſignal Atteſtation to the Truth of Chriſtianity, it would be very abſurd to pretend to draw an Argument from ſuch an extraordinary Inſtance, to ſhew what are the ordinary Methods of God's dealings with Men in bringing them to the Faith of Chriſt. That Apoſtle declares concerning himſelf, that he *did not receive the Goſpel*, which he preached, *of Man, neither was he taught it, but by the Revelation of* Jeſus Chriſt, *Gal.* i. 12. But can it be concluded from thence, that every Chriſtian receives the Goſpel in the ſame immediate way from Chriſt himſelf, without any human Inſtruction? As well might it be ſaid, that when he declares concerning himſelf, that he was *an Apoſtle, not of Man, nor by Man*, his Intention was to ſignify, that all others were

Apoſtles

Apoſtles as well as he. Yet this is the Courſe of our Author's reaſoning, than which nothing can be more abſurd and ridiculous. And even with regard to this Caſe of the Converſion of St. *Paul*, his Faith in Chriſt though ſuddenly wrought was not unreaſonable, or without Evidence. His Underſtanding and Reaſon was fully convinced by what he heard and ſaw of the divine Power and Glory of a riſen Jeſus. And the Influence of the Holy Spirit upon his Mind, enduing him with extraordinary Gifts and Powers, was not a blind Impulſe to engage him to believe he knew not why (which is the Repreſentation this Gentleman is pleas'd to make of the Influence of the Spirit) but enabling him clearly to diſcern the Goſpel-evidence, and giving him a right Knowledge of the Chriſtian Religion, the whole Scheme of its Doctrines and Laws, its Proofs and Evidences, ſo that his Faith was in the ſtricteſt Senſe rational.

It is readily granted, that there was an extraordinary Influence of the Holy Ghoſt upon the Apoſtles, who were choſen to be the firſt authorized Witneſſes of Chriſtianity, and had an immediate Commiſſion from Chriſt himſelf to publiſh his Religion to the World; I ſay, there was an extraordinary Influence of the Holy Ghoſt upon them, both for enabling them to perform the moſt illuſtrious Miracles, and for enduing them with ſpiritual Gifts, and infallibly guiding them in the Doctrines and Laws they were to deliver to the Church in the Name

of Chriſt. And there is nothing in this but what is highly reaſonable. For ſuppoſing God to give an extraordinary Revelation of his Will for the Inſtruction and Direction of Mankind, it was very proper that thoſe to whom he originally gave that Revelation to be by them publiſhed to the World in his Name, ſhould have their Minds extraordinarily illuminated in the Knowledge of the Doctrines and Laws they were to deliver as from him, ſo as to be kept from Error in delivering them; and that they ſhould alſo be enabled to produce ſufficient Credentials of their divine Miſſion, to convince Mankind that he ſent them. God's doing this in the Caſe of the Chriſtian Revelation has a manifeſt Propriety in it, and is an Inſtance of his great Wiſdom and Goodneſs. And it would be a ſtrange thing to pretend to argue from this that Chriſtianity is not on a rational Foundation, or that the Faith of the Goſpel cannot be an Aſſent founded on rational Conviction; when this very Thing is part of the Evidence on which Chriſtianity is founded, and which makes the Aſſent to it reaſonable. And yet this extraordinary Influence of the Holy Ghoſt, promiſed to and conferred upon the Apoſtles for theſe valuable Purpoſes, is what ſeveral of the Texts mentioned by this Writer refer to. Particularly thoſe Texts which he produces with ſo much Pomp, p. 57. *The Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father and the Son, he ſhall teſtify of me.* And again, *The Spirit whom*

whom I ſhall ſend ſhall lead you into all Truth. The former of theſe Paſſages, *The Spirit of Truth ſhall teſtify of me,* relates particularly to the Teſtimony given to Chriſt by the extraordinary Gifts and Operations of the Holy Spirit in that firſt Age. And accordingly our Lord after thoſe Words immediately adds, ſpeaking to his Apoſtles, *And ye alſo ſhall bear Witneſs, becauſe ye have been with me from the Beginning.* John xv. 26, 27. The other Text relates to the infallible Guidance promiſed to the Apoſtles to aſſiſt them in the executing of their Office. And accordingly, after ſaying, *The Spirit whom I ſhall ſend ſhall lead you into all Truth,* he adds, *and he will ſhew you Things to come.* Ch. xvi. 13. And before this, in the ſame Diſcourſe, he had promiſed, *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghoſt—ſhall teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your Remembrance, whatſoever I have ſaid unto you.* Theſe Texts which plainly relate to the Apoſtles, and which in that View have nothing in them but what is proper and neceſſary, and highly for the Honour of Chriſtianity, are applied by this Gentleman, as if they contained a Promiſe of an infallible Guidance of the Spirit to all Chriſtians in every Age *; that they might not *be left liable one Moment*

* In like manner he endeavours to draw an Argument for that univerſal Inſpiration of all Chriſtians which he contends for, from the Promiſe made by our Saviour to his Apoſtles, *Matt.* x. 19, 20. where having told them

Moment to a Poſſibility of Error and Impoſition, as he expreſſes it, p. 60. A thing which is evidently abſurd and falſe in Fact. But then this Falſhood and Abſurdity is not chargeable on the Scripture Scheme, or upon the New Teſtament, but on our Author himſelf and his Miſrepreſentation of it.

Beſides

of the Perſecutions to which they ſhould be expoſed, and that they ſhould be *brought before Governours and Kings for his ſake*, he bids them *take no Thought how or what* they ſhould *ſpeak*; that is, not to be anxiouſly ſollicitous about it, which otherwiſe they might be apt to be; for that it ſhould *be given them in that ſame Hour what* they ſhould *ſpeak*; and adds, *For it is not ye that ſpeak, but the Spirit of your Father that ſpeaketh in you.* By which, though our Saviour does not intend to ſignify, that all uſe and exerciſe of their own Reaſon was to be entirely ſuperſeded, as if they were not to have *ſo much as a ſingle Thought or Suggeſtion of their own*, as our Author gloſſes it; yet he certainly deſigns to ſignify that on ſuch Occaſions they ſhould not be left merely to themſelves, and their own Thoughts and Expreſſions, but that the Spirit ſhould aſſiſt them in both in an extraordinary manner: and this was wiſely and graciouſly provided for the Encouragement of the Apoſtles under the amazing Difficulties they were to encounter with in the firſt Promulgation of a Religion that was to meet with ſo much Oppoſition in the World. Yet from this extraordinary Caſe our Author ſeems willing to infer, that the *Spirit dictates Sentiments in ſecret to the Underſtandings* of all Chriſtians in every Age, and *miraculouſly ſpeaks* to them for their *Inſtruction*, and *gives them what to think as well as what to ſay*. p. 108, 109. And with equal Strength and Juſtice he might argue, that all Chriſtians have the Power of working Miracles, of *healing the Sick, cleanſing the Lepers*, and *raiſing the Dead*, becauſe our Saviour in that Chapter commiſſions and empowers his Apoſtles to do ſo. *ver.* 8.

Beſides the extraordinary Influence of the Holy Ghoſt upon the Apoſtles to endue them with miraculous Powers, and to guide them infallibly in delivering the Doctrine of Chriſt; there was alſo a plentiful Effuſion of the Spirit upon the firſt Chriſtians, though not in the ſame degree with the Apoſtles, which contributed mightily to the ſpreading and propagating the Chriſtian Faith. And conſidering that the Chriſtian Religion at its firſt Publication had almoſt inſuperable Obſtacles to encounter with in a World ſunk in Idolatry, Superſtition, and Vice, there was then great need of an extraordinary Meaſure of divine Influences to accompany the preaching of the Goſpel among thoſe to whom it was publiſhed. And its making ſo ſpeedy and wonderful a Progreſs as it did in face of the greateſt Oppoſition, when it had the inveterate Prejudices, the corrupt Appetites and Paſſions of Men engaged againſt it, and no worldly Advantages on its ſide, furniſheth an additional Proof of its divine Original, and ſhewed a ſignal Interpoſition of Heaven in its favour, and a divine Light and Power accompanying it. And if a Revelation that was at firſt propagated in a way that beſpoke an extraordinary divine Power and Preſence, is alſo of ſuch a nature, that it will bear the cooleſt Examination; if its Proofs and Evidences approve themſelves to our impartial Reaſon, and its Doctrines and Laws appear to be worthy of God and of the moſt excellent Tendency, there is every thing that can

can juſtly be deſired to make our Aſſent to it rational and well-founded. And this is the Caſe of the Chriſtian Revelation.

I doubt not, that upon a critical Examination of the Texts produced by this Writer, it would appear that ſeveral of them, beſides thoſe already mentioned, relate to the firſt Chriſtians, and to the extraordinary Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt in that Age. Of this kind that Text appears to me to be, which he mentions in the firſt place, and on which he ſeems to lay a particular Streſs, *No Man can ſay that Jeſus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghoſt.* It is taken from 1 *Cor.* xii. 3. where St. *Paul* is profeſſedly diſcourſing concerning the extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit poured forth in that firſt Age, and the Perſons endued with thoſe Gifts. And after declaring, that *No Man ſpeaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jeſus accurſed*, which relates to thoſe Jewiſh Teachers that went about anathematizing the Name of Jeſus, and at the ſame time made high Pretenſions to the Holy Ghoſt, which they would not allow any Gentiles could be Partakers of; he adds, *No Man can ſay that Jeſus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghoſt*, where he probably refers to thoſe who in that firſt Age preached the Goſpel, and confirmed it by Miracles, and the extraordinary Gifts conferred upon them; which ſhewed ſuch Perſons were Partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, though ſeveral of them had been originally Gentiles, without whoſe divine Aſſiſtance and Influence they could not

not have done this: This ſeems to be the proper Intention of this Paſſage. Though if it were taken in a more general Senſe, to ſignify that the gracious Aſſiſtance of God's holy Spirit is neceſſary to our believing and acknowledging Chriſt in a right manner, ſo as heartily to receive and ſubmit to him as our Lord (for no body can ſuppoſe that the bare ſaying in Words, that *Jeſus is the Lord* is all that is intended) there is nothing abſurd in ſuch an Interpretation. I freely grant what Chriſtians have generally acknowledged, that there is an Influence of the divine Spirit ſtill communicated for aſſiſting Men of ſincere and upright Minds in the Knowledge and Belief of the Chriſtian Religion, and in the Practice of the Duties there required. Nor is there any thing in this, but what is perfectly agreeable to right Reaſon, and the juſteſt Notions we can form both of Man's preſent Weakneſs and Infirmity, and of the divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs; provided we take this along with us, that theſe gracious Aſſiſtances are communicated in a way perfectly agreeable to the juſt Order of our Faculties, and without offering Violence to the Freedom that belongs to us as reaſonable Creatures, moral Agents, and ſo as not to render our own Endeavours needleſs, but to aſſiſt and animate our Endeavours *. And it is manifeſt, that ſuch is the Repre-

* That God can communicate his gracious Aſſiſtances to the human Mind in a manner perfectly well accommodated

Repreſentation made to us in the ſacred Writings of the Influence of the Holy Spirit, ordinarily communicated to Chriſtians.

The Author produces ſome Paſſages to ſhew, that Believers are repreſented as the *Temples* of God, and as having his Holy Spirit *dwelling* and abiding in them. Theſe are noble Paſſages, which do honour to the ſacred Writings. They are full of Conſolation, and capable of being improved to the moſt excellent Purpoſes. For what can be a greater Encouragement, or a more powerful Incentive to the Practice of Virtue, than to be aſſured that God is graciouſly preſent with good Men, ever ready to aſſiſt, guide, and comfort them by his Spirit? But then it is extremely evident, from the whole Tenour of the Scriptures, that this is ſuppoſed to be ſuch

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modated to our Nature, and ſo as to leave us the juſt Exerciſe of our own Reaſon and Freedom, no Man that has a right Notion either of God or Man can reaſonably doubt; and it can as little be doubted that it is agreeable to his Goodneſs to do ſo. And if we cannot diſtinctly explain the manner of this divine Influence, which is chiefly diſcernible in the Effects, (and I readily grant this Author, that our Saviour ſeems to intimate this in the Texts produced by him, *p.* 107, 108.) he muſt be a ſmall Proficient in Philoſophy, that would look upon this to be a ſufficient Objection againſt the Reality of it. Since no Man that has ſearched into the Nature of Things needs be told, that there are many Things the Certainty of which cannot reaſonably be doubted, tho' the manner of their Exiſtence and Operations be what we are not able to explain. And this particularly is the Caſe with regard to God's providential Concourſe with his Creatures.

a Preſence and Influence, as not to exclude the Uſe of proper Means on our parts, or the Exerciſe of our own rational and moral Powers. So when the *Spirit* is repreſented as *witneſſing with our Spirits*, which is another Paſſage referred to by this Writer; the very Manner of Expreſſion plainly ſhews that the Concurrence of our own Spirits, the Exerciſe of our own Reaſon and Conſideration is neceſſarily ſuppoſed. And in like manner when St. *John* ſaith, that *he that believeth on the Son of God hath the Witneſs in himſelf*, 1 John v. 10. this is not deſigned in oppoſition to all outward Teſtimony. For he begins his Epiſtle with putting thoſe, to whom he writes, in mind of the Teſtimony of him and the other Apoſtles concerning the Things they had heard and ſeen, as what had a great influence in engaging them to believe. Nor does it by any means exclude rational Arguments and Evidence. All outward Helps and Means are taken in, in order to the producing that inward Witneſs or Teſtimony in a Man's own Breaſt, which is then eſpecially completed, when beſides the external Evidences and Atteſtations given to the Truth of Chriſtianity, the Believer has a ſtrong Senſe and Perception of the great Excellency of the Religion of *Jeſus*, and of the Characters of divine Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Purity ſhining forth in it, and feels its happy Influence upon his own Soul in purifying his Heart, and reforming his Life. Such a Perſon may not unfitly be ſaid to have the Wit-

neſs in himſelf; and ſurely this is perfectly conſiſtent with his having a rational Conviction of the Truth of Chriſtianity.

If Faith is repreſented, as this Gentleman obſerves, to be *not of our ſelves*, but to be *the Gift of God*, this is agreeable to the devout Language of the ſacred Writings, which teach us to aſcribe every good thing that is in us eminently to God, *from whom every good Gift doth deſcend.* Thus we are told, that it *is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleaſure:* yet it is evident, that this is not to be underſtood ſo as to exclude our own Endeavours. For we are at the ſame time exhorted to *work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling.* So we are to apply to God to *make us perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in us that which is well-pleaſing and acceptable in his ſight*; but it is manifeſt from the whole Tenour of the New Teſtament, that we muſt *give all Diligence* that we may *grow in Grace* and Virtue, and muſt uſe our utmoſt Care and earneſt Endeavours, to ſtir up our own Powers to the Performance of our Duty, and to cultivate and improve good Affections and Diſpoſitions in our Souls. In like manner, with reſpect to Faith, it is ſo the Gift of God as not to exclude the Concurrence of our own rational Powers, or the Uſe of proper Arguments fitted to work a rational Conviction in the Underſtanding. Chriſtians are exhorted to *build up themſelves in their moſt holy Faith*; and when they

they do not grow in Faith, this is ſtill ſuppoſed to be their own fault, and to be owing to the Negligence and Indiſpoſition of their own Minds.

With regard to thoſe Paſſages, where our Saviour declares, *No Man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath ſent me, draw him*; and *every Man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me*: And again, *No Man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father*: Not to inſiſt on the different Explications that have been given of them, let us grant that they are deſigned to ſignify the Neceſſity of a divine Aſſiſtance in order to a ſincere Belief and Acceptance of *Jeſus Chriſt*, iſſuing in a dutiful Obedience to his Laws, and a hearty Compliance with the Terms of the Goſpel-Covenant; yet ſtill it is manifeſt, that this divine Aſſiſtance implies the Uſe of proper Means and Endeavours on our parts, and the Exerciſe of our own Reaſon, and a careful attending to the Evidence that is offered. Our Saviour all along in his Diſcourſes with the *Jews* ſuppoſes there was ſufficient Evidence to engage Men to believe, and he fairly lays that Evidence before them; appealing to the Scriptures, to the mighty Works which the Father had given him to do, and the excellent Doctrine which he ſent him to teach. And thoſe who with teachable Minds received the convincing Evidence and Teſtimony that God gave to his Son, ſo as to be thereby effectually engaged to

believe and to obey him, might be properly ſaid to be *drawn and taught of God*, and to have *heard and learned of the Father*. And on the other hand, when our Lord declares concerning the unbelieving *Jews*, that it was not *given to them of the Father* to *come* to him; his Intention is not to excuſe their Infidelity by caſting the Cauſe of it upon God, but rather to aggravate their Guilt, in not receiving and attending to the Evidence and Teſtimony that the Father had given to him, which was owing to the bad Diſpoſitions of their Minds. For he every where charges their Unbelief upon their own perverſe Wills, and corrupt Affections, and their hardning their Hearts and ſhutting their Eyes againſt Evidence *. In which caſe it was juſt with God to give them up to their own Hardneſs and Obſtinacy.

Upon the whole, allowing all that can be juſtly demanded, that in the preſent Darkneſs and Corruption of Mankind a divine Aſſiſtance is neceſſary the more effectually to recommend Religion, and engage us to believe and embrace it, and give it its due Weight and Influence upon our Minds; which Aſſiſtance God is ready to impart to thoſe who humbly apply to him for it, and who are ſincerely deſirous to know and do his Will; this indeed is a very good Reaſon for our applying to God by Prayer for his divine Aids, as good Men have always done; but no Argument can be drawn from it to

* See Matt. xiii. 15. John iii. 19, 20. v. 40, 44.

to prove, that it is needleſs for us to uſe our own Endeavours; ſince this divine Aſſiſtance is not intended to exclude, but rather to encourage the Uſe of proper Means and Endeavours on our parts. Nor doth it in any wiſe follow from it, that Religion is not in it ſelf a reaſonable thing. For all the Arguments and Motives of Religion are ſtill maintained in their full Force. And the gracious Proviſion God hath in his great Goodneſs made for aſſiſting our preſent Weakneſs and Infirmity by the Aids of his Holy Spirit, ſhould make us more diligent to uſe our beſt Endeavours to underſtand Religion and to practiſe it; in which caſe this divine Aſſiſtance will be an ineſtimable Advantage to us. But if by our Pride and Obſtinacy, and bad Diſpoſitions, we reject the Evidences of Religion, and reſiſt the Methods of his Grace towards us, this muſt greatly heighten our Guilt, and expoſe us to a more aggravated Condemnation. This Gentleman himſelf ſeems in Words to acknowledge this. How he can do it in conſiſtency with his Scheme, I do not ſee. But ſuppoſing the Account now given of the Nature and Deſign of this Influence to be true, what he ſaith on this head is juſt and reaſonable. That "the Tender of this Conviction, "however potent in its Influence, muſt yet de- "pend greatly upon the proper Diſpoſition of "our Minds to give it reception for its Effi- "cacy, and ſo far will afford ample Matter for "Trial and Probation." That "a rebellious "Oppoſition of the gracious Influence of the

"divine

" divine Spirit deſerves a ſevere Reſentment;" and that "with all Juſtice we may in that caſe "be call'd to a ſtrict Account for our Obſti-"nacy, Impiety, and Perverſeneſs." *p.* 63, 64. And again he talks of "a ſevere Reprehenſion "juſtly due to a rebellious Refuſal and Diſclaim "of proffered Grace;" *p.* 66. and of "God's "withholding Light from ſuch as chuſe to ſit "in Darkneſs, and by their Ingratitude and "Neglect have rendered themſelves unworthy "of all farther Sollicitations." Theſe Expreſſions, tho' not in the Senſe intended by this Writer, contain awful Truths, which I heartily wiſh he would ſeriouſly conſider, tho' it is very likely he will not thank me for any Concern I can be under on his account.

Thus I have conſidered the Account this Gentleman gives of the Influence of the Holy Ghoſt, which proves nothing but his own Unfairneſs, and the great Liberties he allows himſelf in miſrepreſenting the Scriptures, and ridiculing the moſt Sacred Things. For no two things can be more oppoſite to one another than the *true Scriptural Account of this Matter*, and that which this Writer would put upon us as ſuch. The Influence of the Spirit, according to his Repreſentation of it, ſuperſedes the Exerciſe of our own Reaſon, and the Uſe of our own Endeavours; but it is evident, not merely from one or two Paſſages ſeparately conſidered, but from the general Courſe and Tenour of the

New

New Teſtament, that the divine Aſſiſtances there promiſed are conſiſtent with the Exerciſe of our own Reaſon and Underſtanding, and are deſigned to take in the Uſe of all proper Means and Endeavours. The Spirit, as he repreſents it, renders the Scriptures entirely uſeleſs, and leads to a Neglect or Contempt of them *; but it is not the good Spirit of *Chriſt* that inſpires a Contempt of the Scriptures, which are every where referred to by *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, as of great Authority and Uſe, and are repreſented as *able to make us wiſe unto Salvation*, and to make the *Man of God perfect*, &c. According to his Account of the Spirit, it has no regard to the Miracles and other extraordinary Facts and Atteſtations recorded in the Goſpel, as of any Uſe or Significancy; but it is undeniably evident, that in the New Teſtament a great ſtreſs is laid upon theſe things, as illuſtrious Proofs and Evidences of Chriſtianity, and that the Accounts of them were written for this end and purpoſe, to engage us to believe. The Spirit communicated to all Chriſtians, if we may believe him, excludes all outward Teaching; ſo that we are not *to receive the leaſt part of our Knowledge or Inſtruction from one another*; whereas, according to the Goſpel, the Influence

* He calls the Scriptures by way of Contempt, *Manuſcript Authorities and Paper Revelations*; as if a Revelation loſt its Authority and Uſe by being committed to Writing. He may, if he pleaſes, call our Laws and publick Records, *Paper-Laws and Authorities*; but I queſtion, whether this would be thought ſufficient to deſtroy their Authority.

fluence of the Spirit does not render outward Teaching needleſs, which is all along there ſuppoſed to be of great uſe and neceſſity; and there is Proviſion made for its ſtanding Continuance in the Church for the Inſtruction and Edification of Chriſtians in all Ages. The Spirit, according to his Repreſentation, engages Perſons to believe at once, by a ſtrong and irreſiſtible Impulſe, without Reaſon or Evidence, ſo that Faith is completed in an inſtant. But in the New Teſtament, the Faith of Chriſtians is not ſuppoſed to be ordinarily begun and completed at once, or to be produced without any Reaſon that could lay a juſt Foundation for believing; but to be founded on ſufficient Evidence, and capable of continual Growth and Improvement. He repreſents the Holy Ghoſt as abiding with all Chriſtians as their infallible Guide, ſo as to preſerve them from *all Poſſibility of Error and Impoſition*; and to cauſe them to *think all alike* *.

According

* To ſhew that the Influence and infallible Guidance of the Spirit is univerſal, our Author produces that Text, *This is the Light which lighteth every Man that cometh into the World*, which has no relation to any ſuch infallible Guidance of the Spirit at all. The Evangeliſt is there ſpeaking of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, that he is the *true Light, which coming into the World enlightneth every Man*, as the Words might be very properly rendered; which ſignifies no more than our Saviour himſelf intends, when he ſaith, *I am the Light of the World*. The Deſign of ſuch Expreſſions is to ſignify, in oppoſition to the narrow Notions of the *Jews*, who were for confining the Benefit of the Meſſiah to their own Nation, that he was deſign'd to be an univerſal Bleſſing; that he came to inſtruct and enlighten

According to which Scheme, it is impoſſible there ſhould be any Errors or Differences of Opinion among Chriſtians. Whereas in the Goſpel it is all along ſuppoſed, that Perſons may be weak in the Faith, tho' ſincere; that they may differ from one another, that they are liable to Errors and Miſtakes; and it is expreſsly foretold, that there ſhall be Hereſies among them.

I need not take any particular Notice of the Inſinuations he makes, *p.* 61. that the ſacred Writings are corrupted; a Charge which has ſo often been refuted and expoſed with great Strength and Clearneſs. And as to what he talks of, *p.* 62, 63. as if no Man could underſtand the Scriptures without a great deal of Learning and Criticiſm, and being well read in profane Hiſtory, it will be readily own'd that theſe are good Helps for a better underſtanding many Paſſages of Scripture; and it is our great Advantage that we have many ſuch Helps in our own Language, which the Unlearned may

enlighten *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*. He was to be *a Light to lighten the* Gentiles, as well as the *Glory of his People* Iſrael. This alſo is the Intention of that other Paſſage he produces, *the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation* (by which we are there evidently to underſtand the Goſpel of *Jeſus*) *hath appered unto all Men*; in which ſenſe St. *Paul* elſewhere declares, that the *Goſpel was gone into all the World*, and that it was *preached to every Creature which is under Heaven*. Theſe are ſtrong Expreſſions to ſignify, that the Goſpel is deſigned for the Benefit of all Mankind, that the Offers of it are univerſal, and that it actually made a wonderful Progreſs in a ſhort time thro' a great Part of the then known World.

have the benefit of. But the main Principles and Duties of Chriſtianity are ſo frequently repeated and plainly inculcated, that a Man of common Underſtanding may, without any nice Criticiſm or Acquaintance with Hiſtory, by a careful conſidering the Scripture, underſtand them as far as is really neceſſary for Faith or Practice.

This Gentleman having aſſigned what he calls *the true Principle of Goſpel-Evidence*, proceeds in the remaining Part of his Pamphlet to heap up many things without much order, to ſhew that Faith is not only not founded in Reaſon, but directly contrary to it; and that there is an *irreconcilable Oppoſition*, as he expreſſes it, *between the Faith of Grace and the Faith of Reaſon.*

The Proofs he pretends to bring of this from Scripture are very weak, and indeed ſcarce deſerve a particular Conſideration. Thus he argues from our Saviour's declaring that *no Man can receive the Goſpel except he receive it as a little Child*, which he explains as if Chriſt required that Perſons in order to their receiving his Religion ſhould be Children in Underſtanding; when it is manifeſt, that what he intends is, that they ſhould be like Children in Humility and Innocence, and a freedom from Pride and Ambition, and from carnal vicious Prejudices *. Thoſe Words of the Apoſtle *Paul* effectually obviate ſuch Miſconſtructions; *Brethren, be not Children in Underſtanding: howbeit*

* Matt. xviii. 3, 4.

beit in Malice be ye Children, but in Underſtanding be Men *. In like manner St. *Peter* exhorts us to receive the Word as *Babes*, but what he intends by it he himſelf explains, that it is a *laying aſide all Malice, and all Guile and Hypocriſies, and Envies and Evil-ſpeaking* †. And on the other hand, being *Babes* in reſpect of Knowledge, or *unſkilful in the Word of Righteouſneſs*, is repreſented as a Fault in Chriſtians, for which they are reproved ‡.

If the Apoſtle deſcribes Faith to be the *Evidence of things not ſeen*, this does not prove that there is an Inconſiſtency and Oppoſition between Faith and Reaſon, though this Gentleman attempts to bring an Argument from it to ſerve his purpoſe, *p.* 77. On the contrary, it appears from this very Deſcription of Faith, that tho' the Object of it be *Things not ſeen*, yet Faith gives ſuch an *Evidence* of them (and the Word there uſed properly ſignifies an argumentative Evidence) as is ſufficient to ſatisfy the Mind of their Truth and Reality. The firſt Inſtance of Faith there produced is this, that by *Faith we underſtand that the Worlds were framed by the Word of God, ſo that Things which are ſeen were not made of Things which do appear.* ver. 3. And it is repreſented as the main Principle of Faith, that *he that cometh to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* ver. 6. And in both

* 1 Cor. xiv. 20. † Pet. ii. 1, 2. ‡ Heb. v. 13. 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

theſe Caſes, though the Things to be believed are Things removed from our bodily Senſes, yet the believing them is no way inconſiſtent with Reaſon, but perfectly agreeable to it. The other Inſtances of Faith recorded in that Chapter are high Inſtances of Truſt in God, and Reliance on his Promiſe and Faithfulneſs, his Power and Goodneſs, even in very difficult Circumſtances. But in none of them was Faith contrary to Reaſon. Our Author indeed would fain have the Faith of *Abraham* paſs for an unreaſonable one, becauſe it is ſaid, that *againſt Hope he believed in Hope*; the Meaning of which is no more than this, that he believed a Thing which ſeemed very improbable, and contrary to the common Courſe of Things: yet he did not believe againſt Reaſon; for as he had ſufficient Aſſurance that God had promiſed it, ſo he *was fully perſuaded that what he had promiſed he was able alſo to perform.* And there was nothing in this way of judging, but what right Reaſon muſt approve. See *Rom.* iv. 18, 20, 21.

Our Author thinks it a hard Caſe, *p.* 78. that *Zachariah* ſhould be ſtruck dumb for *heſitating* about a Thing contrary to the *common Courſe of Nature*; but ſuppoſing him to have believed that it was an Angel that came to him with a Meſſage from God, Reaſon ought to have led him to conclude, that it was a Thing not beyond the divine Power; and his being ſtruck dumb for a time, was both deſigned as a Chaſtiſement

tiſement for his Fault in heſitating, and as a Sign to himſelf and others too of the Certainty of the Event foretold. And whereas he alſo thinks our Saviour was in the wrong to reprove his Diſciples as of *little Faith*, becauſe they thought *they were going to be drowned when the* Ship was *ſinking under them*, and it would have been a *Sin againſt common Senſe to have thought otherwiſe*; it is manifeſt the Reproof was juſt. For if their Faith had been as ſtrong as in reaſon it ought to have been, conſidering the many illuſtrious Proofs they had ſeen before this of Chriſt's divine Power, they needed not to have been afraid of periſhing, when they had him with them.

When our Saviour ſaid to *Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen, thou haſt believed; bleſſed are they which have not ſeen, and yet have believed*; he did not intend to pronounce thoſe bleſſed who ſhould believe without any Reaſon at all, as this Gentleman inſinuates; but he blames *Thomas* for not believing that he was riſen from the dead, except he himſelf ſaw him with his own Eyes; though he had Reaſon ſufficient to believe it, both becauſe he knew that it was what Chriſt himſelf had foretold and promiſed whilſt alive, and becauſe it was confirm'd to him by the concurring Teſtimony of thoſe who had ſeen him after he was riſen. So that our Saviour here condemns the Principle of thoſe who are not for believing a Thing, however well atteſted, except it be confirm'd to them by the

Teſtimony

Teſtimony of their own Senſes; which is the very Principle this Gentleman proceeds upon; a Principle perfectly unreaſonable, and which all the World owns to be ſo in every other Caſe.

He produces with great Pomp that Paſſage *Rom.* x. 6—10. *The Righteouſneſs which is by Faith ſpeaketh on this wiſe; Say not in thine Heart, who ſhall aſcend up into Heaven? (that is, to bring Chriſt down from above) Or, who ſhall deſcend into the Deep? (that is, to bring up Chriſt again from the dead.) But what ſaith it? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that is, the Word of Faith which we preach. For with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteouſneſs, and with the Mouth Confeſſion is made unto Salvation.* I am not ſo clear-ſighted as this Gentleman, who ſees in this Text a full Demonſtration that the Faith required in the Goſpel is not a rational one. To me the contrary appears here to be ſuppoſed, *viz.* that the Goſpel does not inſiſt upon impracticable Conditions, and that the Faith of the Goſpel is founded upon Evidence not very abſtruſe, and above our Capacity, but ſuch as is clear and obvious to a ſincere and well-diſpoſed Mind.

It would be more to his purpoſe, if it were true, what he alledges, *p.* 84. That "there is "no one Leſſon, that the holy Writings have "taken more Care to inculcate, than that of "denying our Reaſon to give our Faith Scope."

For

For a proof of this, he only brings one Text, and that he ſtrangely miſrepreſents. He aſks, "Are we not ſtrictly enjoin'd to *captivate Reaſon to the Obedience of Faith?*" And his Comment upon it is this, "*To captivate*, to "lay it under the moſt abſolute Reſtraint and "Prohibition, not to permit it the leaſt Opportunity or Freedom to exert itſelf, or interpoſe on any Occaſion whatever." The Paſſage he refers to is 2 *Cor.* x. 5. where St. *Paul* expreſſes himſelf thus, *Though we walk in the Fleſh, we do not war after the Fleſh. For the Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of ſtrong Holds, caſting down Imaginations* or *Reaſonings, and every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the Knowledge of God, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Chriſt.* His Intention is not to ſignify, that what he taught was contrary to right Reaſon, or that when he converted Perſons to the Faith, he obliged them to renounce their Underſtandings, or to believe without Reaſon or againſt it; but his Deſign is plainly to ſhew the great Succeſs of his Miniſtry, in ſubduing all oppoſite Prejudices and Reaſonings; which he expreſſes by *caſting them down* and bringing them *into Captivity*, to carry on the Metaphor, becauſe he had compared his Miniſtry to a *Warfare*. But ſtill this Succeſs was owing to ſuperior Evidence, which carried a greater Conviction than any Reaſonings that could be brought againſt it.

Thus

Thus this Paſſage, which is only deſigned to ſhew the ſtrong and convincing Evidence, and the Proofs of a divine Power and Original whereby the Goſpel was eſtabliſhed, is uſed by our Author to ſhew, that the Faith of the Goſpel is contrary to Reaſon. And though there be no *Injunction* here at all of any kind, yet he improves it into a general ſtrict *Injunction* to all Chriſtians, *never to exert* their *Reaſon upon any Occaſion whatſoever.*

It is with the ſame Candour that he obſerves, that "the Scripture-Teſt and Standard for finding out the Spirit of Truth is no more than "this: *Hereby ye ſhall know them—Every one* "*that confeſſeth that Chriſt is come in the Fleſh* "*is of God.* Now this is evidently what Philoſophers call arguing in a Circle, and begging "the Queſtion. But in Faith it is a neceſſary "Preliminary, He *that cometh to Chriſt muſt* "*believe that he* is." *p.* 78.

Here he repreſents it, as if the Scripture propoſed to us to believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt; without any Proof at all, but only the bare Word of thoſe that firſt preached and publiſhed it; and that the firſt Principle of Faith is a taking for granted the very Thing that is to be proved. Can any thing be more unfair and diſingenuous, when the Deſign of the whole Goſpel is to ſhew that Chriſt's divine Miſſion was confirmed by the moſt illuſtrious Evidences, and divine Atteſtations? And it is manifeſt, that in the Paſſages here referred to by this Writer,

all

all theſe Evidences are ſuppoſed. The Apoſtle *John* is here writing to thoſe who were already Chriſtians upon full convincing Evidence, and whom he ſuppoſes to be well appriz'd of the main Doctrines of Chriſtianity *. And to ſuch Perſons he might juſtly lay it down as a Mark or Teſt, by which they might diſtinguiſh thoſe falſe Prophets or Teachers, which he tells them were then *gone out into the World*, that they *denied* Jeſus to be the *Chriſt*, or *confeſſed* him not to be *come in the Fleſh*, whoſe divine Miſſion had been confirmed by ſuch ſignal Atteſtations, and convincing Evidences. For it is in all Caſes allowed reaſonable, when a Truth has been ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, to make uſe of it as a Principle by which to detect and expoſe Falſhoods.

Our Author, who has a knack of applying Scripture in a way that no Man but himſelf would have thought of, would fain extract a ſort of Proof that Faith is not a rational thing, from our being required to hold *the Faith, not in Unity of Underſtanding*, as he gloſſes it, but *in the Bond of Peace, and Unity of the Spirit*, *p.* 75. He plainly refers to that admirable Paſſage of the Apoſtle *Paul*, *Eph.* iv. 2, 3. where we are exhorted to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*; a Paſſage that does honour to the ſacred Writings, and which is deſigned to ſignify that we ſhould be united in Peace and Love, tho' not in all things exactly of

* See 1 John i. 1, 2, 3. ii. 13, 21, 24, 27.

the ſame Opinion; concerning which ſee my former Letter, *p.* 19. He alſo inſinuates, *p.* 76. that the Apoſtle approves the Diſtinction between *Faith and Underſtanding*, when he affirms of the Caſe "of repeating Prayers in an "unknown Tongue, that we may *pray with* "*the Spirit*, tho' not with the *Underſtanding*." As if the Apoſtle's Meaning was, that he that pray'd with the Spirit did not himſelf underſtand what he pray'd; whereas it is extremely evident to any one that examines that Chapter, that the Apoſtle there plainly ſuppoſes, that the Perſon that pray'd in an unknown Tongue did himſelf underſtand what he pray'd, and was *edified* by it, but that if he did not interpret what he pray'd, others did not underſtand him.

He would alſo improve it as a Preſumption againſt the Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity, that not *many wiſe Men after the Fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called*, p. 79. and he frequently obſerves, that the firſt Publiſhers of it were *illiterate Perſons, no Proficients in any Science.* And probably, if many of the firſt Publiſhers of Chriſtianity, or the firſt Converts to it, had been Perſons of Eminence for Riches and Power, and for their Station in the World, or had been great Philoſophers, renowned for Learning and Eloquence, thoſe who now affect to deſpiſe Chriſtianity for the Meanneſs of thoſe who firſt publiſhed and embraced it, would have regarded this as a ſtrong Preſumption,

ſumption, that the Chriſtian Religion was a Contrivance owing to the Genius and Policy, or Intereſt of its firſt Publiſhers; and that the Progreſs it made was to be attributed to theſe Advantages. But it pleaſed God in his Wiſdom ſo to order it, as to leave no room for Pretences of this kind. The Character and Circumſtances of thoſe that were firſt employ'd in publiſhing the Goſpel, afford a convincing Argument, that the Religion they publiſhed was not of their own Invention, nor was the Succeſs they met with owing to human Power or Authority, or to their own Learning and Eloquence, or to any worldly Advantages, but to the Force of Evidence, and a divine Preſence and Bleſſing accompanying it.

But he urges farther, that "if Chriſtianity "had proceeded upon rational Principles, it "could never certainly have laboured under "all that Contempt in the eye of the "learned World, which it did." *p.* 71. And here he breaks out into a high Encomium of the Age in which Chriſtianity firſt appeared; that "Reaſon was then ſure to have the faireſt "play imaginable; never were her Friends, "the profeſs'd Searchers for Truth, more coun-"tenanced and encouraged; and the World "was never better diſpoſed to attend the can-"vaſſing things by Argument, if that had been "the ground they went upon."

It will be acknowledged, that at the time when Chriſtianity appeared, the Knowledge of

the Arts, Eloquence and Politeneſs, had ſpread conſiderably; and Men in general, it is to be preſumed, were better qualified for examining and judging, than in a leſs learned and civilized Age they would have been. And the Chriſtian Religion's making ſo great a Progreſs as it did, in ſuch an Age as this, and in the *Roman* Empire, the moſt knowing and civilized Part of the World, is a Circumſtance very much to its Honour, more than if it had been at firſt preached among rude and barbarous Nations, quite uncultivated, and deſtitute of all Learning and Improvement. It is true, it did not meet with a ready Reception among thoſe who then took upon them the Name of Philoſophers; nor ought this to be turned to its diſadvantage; ſince there were no Perſons leſs diſpoſed for an unprejudiced Enquiry into the nature of this Religion, than they were. Some of them, as particularly the *Epicureans*, which was then the moſt numerous and prevailing Sect, denied a Providence, and ridiculed all Religion as Superſtition. Others of them, with the Scepticks, bent the whole Force of their Wit and Subtilty to ſubvert all Evidence of Reaſon, and ſhew that Truth and Certainty is not any where to be found. And with regard to the ſeveral other Sects of Philoſophers it may be obſerved, that they generally thought themſelves in honour obliged to ſtand up for what were looked upon as the diſtinguiſhing Tenets of their particular Sect, and the Dictates of their ſeveral Founders.

Such

Such Men blown up with a vain Conceit of their own ſuperior Wiſdom and Learning, would be apt to think it beneath them to rank themſelves among the Diſciples of a crucified *Jeſus*, or to receive Inſtructions from the firſt Preachers of Chriſtianity: Men not bred up in the Schools of Philoſophers, and who made no Oſtentation of their Learning and Eloquence. Any Man of common Underſtanding, and good Diſpoſitions, not liſted into any Party of Philoſophers, was certainly in a fairer way of judging impartially of Truth than they generally were. If therefore the Apoſtle warns thoſe to whom he writes, to *beware leſt any* ſhould *ſpoil them thro' Philoſophy and vain Deceit*; this Caution is very reconcilable with the Suppoſition of the Chriſtian Religion's being agreeable to Reaſon. And it is with great Juſtice that he pronounces concerning many of thoſe that were then called Philoſophers, that *profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe they became Fools: They became vain in their Imaginations, and their fooliſh Heart was darkned.*

If there were Perſons of eminent Parts and Learning, and ſtrong Reaſon, that were Enemies to Chriſtianity, both at its firſt Appearance, and afterwards, it may be juſtly preſumed to have been very much owing to their not taking pains to examine into that Religion, and conſider the Evidence brought for it. This may well be ſuppoſed, when ſuch Men as *Tacitus* and *Suetonius*, ſo exact in other matters, ſhew themſelves ſo ſtrangely negligent and ignorant in

in what relates to the *Jews* and Chriſtians, and ſpeak of them according to popular Reports and Prejudices; without ever, as far as appears, giving themſelves the trouble to get any certain Information concerning them, or the Principles they profeſſed. And tho' *Pliny* with more Candour gives an honourable Teſtimony to the Probity of the primitive Chriſtians, yet it is very evident from the Account he gives, that he did not concern himſelf to make any diſtinct Enquiry into the Nature of their Religion, its Doctrines and Principles, or the Evidence that could be produced for it. This ſeems to have been the general Diſpoſition of the Heathens with regard to Chriſtianity; and no wonder that thoſe who were ſo negligent and ſuperficial in their Enquiries, did not embrace a Religion ſo contrary to that which was eſtabliſhed, and to their worldly Reputation and Intereſts. But yet it is certain, that there were many excellent Philoſophers, and other Perſons of Note and Eminency, that overcame all their Prejudices, and embraced the Chriſtian Faith, before it had the Countenance of the Civil Authority. Many of the ancient Apologiſts for Chriſtianity were Perſons of conſiderable Learning and Eloquence, and extremely well verſed in the *Pagan* Writings and Philoſophy *. And with regard to moſt

* *Arnobius*, who had himſelf been a rigid Pagan, and a Man of conſiderable Learning and Acuteneſs, and who turned Chriſtian, even in the perſecuting Reign of *Dioclatian*,

moſt of them, it appears from the Accounts they give us of themſelves, that they had been ſtrongly prejudiced in favour of Paganiſm, in which they had been educated, and which had all worldly Advantages on its ſide: and it was by examining into the Chriſtian Religion, and conſidering the Excellency of it, and the Evidences brought for it, that they were convinced; and that at a time when they had the beſt Opportunities of enquiring into the Truth or Falſehood of the original Facts of Chriſtianity; and when, if there had been any Counter-Evidence to be produced, they might eaſily have known it; yea, and at a time when by embracing it they expoſed themſelves to the moſt bitter Reproaches, and moſt grievous Sufferings.

It was a thing ſo well known, that many of the Chriſtians were eminent for their Learning and Knowledge in Philoſophy, and had made an advantageous uſe of it in defence of Chriſtianity, and in refuting and expoſing the Pagan Superſtition and Idolatry, that the Emperor *Julian* thought it one of the beſt Methods he could take to ſubvert Chriſtianity, to ſhut up the Schools,

cletian, taking notice of the wonderful Progreſs of the Chriſtian Religion, obſerves, that Men of great Parts, Orators, Grammarians, Lawyers, Phyſicians, and Philoſophers, relinquiſhing the Sentiments in which they had been educated, embraced the Chriſtian Faith.——*Magnis ingeniis præditi Oratores, Grammatici, Rhetores, Conſulti-juris ac Medici, Philoſophiæ etiam Secreta rimantes, Magiſteria hæc expetunt, ſpretis quibus paulo ante fidebant.* Arnob. adverſ. Gentes, Lib. 2.

Schools, and hinder the Chriſtians from Learning. This Gentleman indeed takes upon him to blame his Politicks in this, and could, it ſeems, have directed him to a better Method of putting a ſtop to the Progreſs of Chriſtianity, *viz.* by opening to the Chriſtians the Schools of the Philoſophers, *p.* 74. But whatever Opinion I may have of our Author's great Sagacity, I apprehend *Julian* and his Adviſers underſtood the State of things at that time much better than he; and were more capable of judging from their own Obſervation, what was the moſt likely way to effect a Deſign they had ſo nearly at heart.

I need not take any particular notice of this Gentleman's Declamation, from *p.* 70, to *p.* 75. to ſhew the Inconſiſtency there is between Chriſtianity and Philoſophy. It certainly argues a very peculiar degree of Aſſurance in this Writer, in the ſame Pamphlet in which he takes occaſion to mention the illuſtrious Names of Lord *Bacon*, Mr. *Boyle* *, Mr. *Locke*, and Sir *Iſaac Newton*, the greateſt Philoſophers of this, or perhaps any Age, to take upon him to pronounce with ſo much Confidence, that there is an irreconcilable

* This excellent Philoſopher, Mr. *Boyle*, has written an admirable Treatiſe, call'd the *Chriſtian Virtuoſo*, on purpoſe to ſhew the good Agreement there is between Experimental (*i. e.* the beſt and ſoundeſt) Philoſophy and Chriſtianity;——And what a Tendency a good Acquaintance with the former hath to diſpoſe a Man for receiving and believing the latter, and diſcerning and acknowledging the Force of its Proofs.

concilable Oppoſition between the Chriſtian Religion and Philoſophy, and that no Man can be a good Chriſtian and Philoſopher at once. They were Chriſtians that have ſet Philoſophy on the nobleſt Foundation, that have carried it to the greateſt Height, and enrich'd it with the moſt important Diſcoveries. And tho' he inſinuates, that thoſe of the meaneſt Underſtandings are beſt qualified for believing, and have moſt *of true Zeal*, and *Acuteneſs of Spiritual Diſcernment*, and ſeems willing to claim the *brighteſt Votaries of the rational Claſs* on the ſide of Infidelity; yet nothing is capable of a clearer Proof, than that the moſt diſtinguiſhed Names in the Republick of Letters, thoſe that have diſcovered the greateſt Strength of Reaſon, and Compaſs of Knowledge, have been Perſons that have ſhewn a high Eſteem for Chriſtianity. And it has been no ſmall pleaſure to me to obſerve within the compaſs of my own Acquaintance, that Men of the beſt Underſtandings, and moſt generous way of thinking I have ever known, as well as of the beſt Characters, and moſt exemplary Morals and Virtues, were the firmeſt Chriſtians. And I muſt confeſs it has given me ſome Emotion, when I have ſeen Perſons every way their Inferiors, no way remarkable for the Goodneſs of their Morals, or any extraordinary Strength of Genius, and that did not ſeem to give themſelves much trouble in cloſe thinking, aſſume a kind of Superiority, merely on

account of their partly rejecting the Faith of the Goſpel.

There is one thing in his Harangue about the Oppoſition between the Chriſtian Religion and Philoſophy, which it may be proper to take notice of, to ſhew the great Conſiſtency of this Writer. He had in the former Part of his Letter repreſented Reaſon as in an eternal Fluctuation and Uncertainty; that the *Decrees of a human Underſtanding can in their nature have no pretenſion to be irreverſible*; and that the Philoſopher *cannot be certain of his own Conſtancy or laſting Attachment to any Principles*; nor that *his Judgment ſhall be inviolably fixed to one Point*; p. 25, 26. But here he repreſents it as the Character of a Philoſopher, that he *has contracted an inviolable Attachment to certain eſtabliſhed Teſts, and will hear of nothing that does not fall in exactly with what he calls the Laws of Nature, which he has already irreverſibly determined*; and that, he makes *moral Relations the Touchſtone for the Trial of all Truths*; p. 73. What he here offers, ſhews a great Inconſiſtency between this Author and himſelf, but none at all between Chriſtianity and Philoſophy; ſince it is certain, and has often been ſhewn, that the Chriſtian Religion is perfectly conſiſtent with thoſe Laws and Relations; and they that have treated thoſe Laws of Nature and Moral Relations with the greateſt Strength and Clearneſs, and to whom the World is moſt obliged on this head, have been Chriſtian Writers. This

This Gentleman takes occaſion in his Pamphlet to mention ſeveral great Men, and their Performances. *Stilling fleet's Origines Sacræ*, Dr. *Clark's Demonſtration*, &c. Mr. *Addiſon's Treatiſe of the Chriſtian Religion*; *The Trial of the Witneſſes*; *The Analogy of Reaſon and Revelation*: And by juſt mentioning them in a ſneering way, has no doubt done enough to convince his Readers that they are very inſignificant Things, and that it would be loſt pains to conſider them. So extraordinary a Man is this Author, that one Daſh from his lucky Pen ſhall be of more force than all their learned Writings.

It is pleaſant enough to hear him expreſſing his Concern for the great Prejudice that is done to Chriſtianity, by the carrying on of *Boyle's* Lectures, which he *cannot avoid* regarding as a *very principal Cauſe of the preſent prevailing Diſpoſition and Turn to Infidelity*; p. 85, 86. And I believe every body is convinced, that if this had really been the Caſe, this Gentleman would not have been ſo forward to complain of it. All that one can gather from what he ſays on this Subject is, that he and his Friends would be very well pleaſed to have thoſe Lectures laid down, which I muſt own with me is a very good Reaſon for their being continued, and a ſtrong Preſumption of their Excellency and Uſefulneſs *.

* As theſe Lectures are deſigned for the Defence of Natural Religion as well as Reveal'd, it ſeems, according to our Author, Reaſoning is equally an Enemy to both.

He declaims very rhetorically, *p.* 87——94. on the Inconſiſtency of the Gentlemen employ'd in carrying on thoſe Lectures, in urging Perſons to a free Examination and Enquiry; and at the ſame time exhorting them to embrace or adhere to the Chriſtian Faith, and ſetting before them the Guilt and Danger of Unbelief. He is pleas'd here to make Speeches for them, which, as he manages the matter, look odd enough; and it would be very eaſy, if any Man were diſpoſed to ſuch an Employment, to make a Speech for this Gentleman himſelf drawn out of the Principles of his Book, that would be much more inconſiſtent and ridiculous. The Principles upon which this Part of his Declamation proceeds, and on which the whole Ridicule is founded, are ſuch as theſe; that the being educated in any Religion, or baptized into it, abſolutely precludes all future Enquiry or Examination; that there can be no fair Examination, where there is not an abſolute Neutrality or Indifferency with regard to the Principles enquired into; and that all Examination neceſſarily ſuppoſes at leaſt a temporary Diſbelief; that whatever is propoſed to Examination or Enquiry may be innocently rejected; and that if a Man may doubt or ſuſpend his Aſſent for a while, he may doubt always; that no Man can without claiming Infallibility exhort another to embrace the Principles he himſelf judges to be true and important, or ſpeak to him of any Danger in rejecting them. Theſe are the Principles here

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ſuppoſed, and which he had laid down in the former Part of his Pamphlet. I have diſtinctly conſidered them in my former Letter, and ſhall not now repeat what I there offered. I ſhall only at preſent obſerve, that notwithſtanding this Gentleman's curious Harangue, it is obvious to common Senſe, that when a Man upon the moſt mature Conſideration is ſatisfied by Arguments which he judges good and valid, that ſuch and ſuch Principles are of great importance to the Happineſs of Men, and to the Cauſe of Religion and Virtue in the World, this muſt naturally make him deſirous both to confirm thoſe in the Belief of them, and in a ſuitable Practice, that profeſs to believe them already, and to bring over others to the Belief and Acknowledgment of thoſe Truths, by all the fair Methods of Reaſon and Argument in his power. If he looks upon thoſe Truths to be of great importance, on which much depends, he cannot but repreſent them as ſuch; and if he be a Perſon who has himſelf carefully examined, and upon an attentive Conſideration of the Argument has found the Evidence riſe up ſtrong to his view, it is natural for him to recommend Enquiry to others, in hopes it will have the ſame happy effect upon them. And if he thinks he has reaſon to conclude, that the true Cauſe of their not believing thoſe Truths is their want of conſidering them fairly and impartially, or that it is owing to vicious Prejudices and faulty Diſpoſitions of Mind; then it is very reaſonable for him to warn them

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ſeriouſly and earneſtly of the bad Conſequences of ſuch a Conduct, in a Matter that he looks upon to be of the higheſt importance. This a Man may conſiſtently do, without claiming the Privilege of abſolute Infallibility.

With regard to this Writer himſelf, any Man that thinks he diſcerns in his way of treating this Subject many Things very unfair and diſingenuous, and unbecoming an impartial Enquirer after Truth; many Things that argue a great Want of Candour, and a mighty Willingneſs to miſrepreſent and ſubvert Chriſtianity at any rate, tho' with it he ſhould ſubvert all Religion; any Man that thinks thus, (and whoſoever carefully conſiders the Tendency of this Pamphlet, and the groſs Miſrepreſentations with which it abounds, will be naturally led to think ſo,) might very conſiſtently, without pretending to Infallibility, admoniſh this Gentleman of the Unjuſtifiableneſs of ſuch a Temper and Conduct, and earneſtly recommend to him a more equal and attentive Examination of the Nature of the Chriſtian Religion and its Evidence; eſpecially conſidering the Declarations made in the Goſpel, concerning the Guilt and Danger of thoſe who, when it is made known to them, diſbelieve and reject it.

Our Author himſelf often mentions thoſe Declarations, but it is manifeſt, that it is only with a deſign to expoſe them, and Chriſtianity on the account of them. And in order to this, he puts the Caſe of Perſons continuing Unbelievers with the beſt Diſpoſitions in the World, after the fulleſt

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and moſt impartial Conſideration, and whoſe Unbelief is not owing to any Fault on their parts, but is abſolutely unavoidable and invincible. But this is not the Caſe the Goſpel puts. On the contrary, it is ſtill ſuppoſed, that the Unbelievers there condemned are ſuch as love Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds are evil; that their Unbelief is owing to faulty Cauſes, to vicious Prejudices and wrong Affections and Diſpoſitions of Mind, to their hardning their Hearts, and ſhutting their Eyes againſt Evidence. This is there ſuppoſed to be the general Caſe of Unbelievers; and their Guilt and Condemnation is repreſented as highly aggravated. If there be any particular Exceptions, they muſt be left to the Mercy and Equity of the ſupreme Lawgiver, but ſuch Exceptions could not be properly taken notice of in the Goſpel-Law. It would not be wiſe or fit, ſuppoſing a well-atteſted Revelation to have been really given from Heaven of great importance to Mankind, to put the Caſe of any Perſon's being excuſable in not believing or receiving it, when fairly laid before him. This would ſoon be abuſed; the believing and receiving it would be looked upon as a Matter of Indifferency, and ſo the Deſign for which that Revelation was given, would be in a great meaſure defeated.

The remaining Part of his Pamphlet has little in it that deſerves Conſideration. He declaims againſt the Methods made uſe of by Magiſtrates, and in the Univerſities, for promoting

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the Chriſtian Faith, and diſcouraging free Enquiry. *p.* 95——102. And if any wrong or miſtaken Methods have been made uſe of for promoting the Intereſts of Religion, which no doubt has often been the Caſe, I don't ſee that Chriſtianity can be made accountable for them, or by what Logick it can be concluded from thence, that it is not a rational Religion. But I think it cannot reaſonably be denied, that ſuppoſing the Principles of the Chriſtian Religion to be beneficial to Society, tending to promote the Practice of Piety, Fidelity, Virtue and good Morals, and that Infidelity tends to ſet Men looſe from Reſtraints, and to encourage Licentiouſneſs, Immorality and Vice, a Magiſtrate that is perſuaded of this may very juſtly encourage the one by all prudent Methods conſiſtent with Liberty and the publick Rights, and diſcountenance the other. Nor can the Univerſities, that have the Care of educating Youth committed to them, be blamed for endeavouring to train them up by Reaſon and Argument, in thoſe Principles, which are moſt for the Good of their Country and of Mankind, and for promoting Religion and Virtue. The ſame may be ſaid with regard to Parents, that have any Concern for the Good of their Children. Nor can any thing be more abſurd than what this Gentleman inſinuates, *p.* 102. as if Parents could not breed up Children in the Principles of Religion, without arrogating to themſelves Infallibility. For if they had only a Probability

of the Truth and Excellency of the Principles of Religion, it would be their Duty to endeavour to inſtil thoſe Principles betimes into the tender Minds of their Children, and would be a very wrong thing to leave them at large in a World, where they are liable to be led into Principles and Practices of the moſt pernicious Tendency, without endeavouring to guard them by good Inſtructions againſt thoſe Principles and Practices.

It is not neceſſary to take particular Notice of the Quotations he produces with ſo much Pomp from Biſhop *Beveridge*; ſince whatever Eſteem we may have for the Learning or Piety of any particular Writer, if he has fallen into any improper Sentiments or Expreſſions, it would not be fair to turn them to the Diſadvantage of Chriſtianity, which is in no wiſe accountable for them. The Book from which our Author quotes theſe Paſſages was written when the Biſhop was very young, and it is not much to be wondered at if there are ſeveral things in it not well digeſted, and written in an unguarded and hyperbolical manner. But ſince in that Book he gives an Account at length both of what he believed and of his Reaſons for believing, it appears that he was far from looking upon the Influence of the Spirit to be, what this Gentleman repreſents it, a blind irrational Impulſe, or to be at all inconſiſtent with believing upon Reaſon and Evidence.

Our Author concludes his Pamphlet with recapitulating and applauding his own Performance, which I hope however will not have the Effect that ſeems to be intended by it. That Man muſt certainly be already very ſtrongly prejudiced in favour of Infidelity, who can be brought to think worſe of the Chriſtian Religion, for the Repreſentations he is pleaſed to make of it. He undertakes indeed to ſhew that *Chriſtianity* is *not founded on Argument*, but any one that reflects on the unfair Arts made uſe of by this Gentleman, and others that have appeared on that Side, and how little of ſolid Reaſoning they have been able to oppoſe to the Defences that have been made for Chriſtianity, will be apt to think, that it may with much greater Juſtice be ſaid, that *Infidelity is not founded on Reaſon or Argument*; and that if it ſpreads among us, which this Writer ſeems to glory in, though I doubt not he mightily exaggerates it beyond the Truth and Reality of the Caſe, it muſt be owing to ſome other Cauſe than fair and impartial Enquiry. Some have been prejudiced againſt Chriſtianity on account of the Ill-conduct of many of its Miniſters and Profeſſors, or of the Abſurdities that have been taught, and the Corruptions that have obtained among thoſe that call themſelves Chriſtians. But if this were all, a calm and impartial Conſideration of the Chriſtian Religion in its genuine Purity and Simplicity as laid down in the holy Writings, would be an effectual Preſervative a-

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gainſt this Prejudice. But beſides this, there is in ſome Tempers a ſtrong Affectation of appearing to be Perſons of ſuperior Genius, able to break through the Force of Education, and common Prejudices; and this I doubt not has carried many who were not able to diſtinguiſh themſelves to advantage by their ſuperior Virtues or Abilities, to endeavour to do it by oppoſing and rejecting the Faith of Chriſtians, and on this account aſſuming to themſelves a Judgment and Penetration above the Vulgar, as if they could ſee farther than the reſt of Mankind. But the moſt powerful Prejudice of all againſt Chriſtianity, and which has a much ſtronger Force to incline ſome Perſons to reject it, than any or all the Prejudices in its favour to incline Men to embrace it, is that which ariſes from the Byaſs of their corrupt Luſts and Paſſions. When Men are devoted to any of thoſe Sins, which the Goſpel forbids under the ſevereſt Penalties, they muſt either renounce the Scriptures, or condemn themſelves. A Man that is under the Power of ſtrong vicious Inclinations and depraved Habits, will of courſe be prejudiced againſt a Religion, which if it be true obliges him to counteract and mortify his darling Appetites, and will not ſuffer him to be eaſy in his licentious Courſes, and teaches him to expect a dreadful Puniſhment in a future State, as the Effect of his Ill-conduct in this. His Intereſt and Inclinations naturally bribe his Judgment to pronounce againſt ſuch a Religion,

they give force to every Objection, and will hardly admit him calmly to conſider its Proofs. And therefore in an Age of growing Diſſoluteneſs and Corruption of Manners, it is not very ſurprizing to ſee an Increaſe of Infidelity too.

On the other hand, a Man of real Piety and Virtue, one who is a devout Adorer of the Deity, who endeavours to govern his Paſſions, and is regular in his Life, can ſcarce help approving and wiſhing well to a Religion of ſuch an excellent Tendency, that raiſes him to the moſt ſublime Hopes, that gives him the moſt raviſhing Diſcoveries and Aſſurances of God's rich Grace and Mercy, and of his wonderful Love to Mankind, and of the Glories prepared in a future State, as the Reward of a Life of ſincere Piety and Virtue in this. I will therefore readily own, and let our Author make the moſt of this Conceſſion, that a good Man will be apt to be prejudiced in favour of the Chriſtian Religion. But then this Prejudice, if it muſt be called ſo, is a juſt and reaſonable one. When a Man diſcerns the Characters of divine Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Purity in the Goſpel, when he feels its Suitableneſs to his own Caſe, the happy Effect it has upon himſelf in purifying his Heart and governing his Life, in ſtrengthening good Diſpoſitions, and ingaging him to abound in every good Work, this hath a natural Tendency to convince one of a ſincere and upright Mind, that the Goſpel is not the Work of Impoſtors, that it is worthy of God, and

came

came from him. And it is a great Proof that the Chriſtian Religion is founded in Reaſon and Evidence, when it has both ſuch obvious Characters and Proofs of its Excellency and Divinity, as ſtrike the Minds and internal Senſe of thoſe who are not ſo well able to carry their Views through a long Chain and Series of Reaſonings; and when it is alſo confirmed by ſuch a Variety of Arguments and Evidences, as taken in a more extenſive View are capable of giving Satisfaction to thoſe of the greateſt Leiſure and Penetration. Theſe Reaſons and Evidences have often been repreſented to the World with great Strength and Clearneſs, nor do I find this Writer has offered any thing to prove thoſe Reaſons inſufficient.

I have now obeyed your Commands in communicating my Thoughts to you upon this Pamphlet, and have not left any thing in it unexamined, that ſeemed to me to deſerve Notice. And as this Writer makes ſome ſhew of treating the Subject he has undertaken in a methodical Way, I have, that he might not complain of having his Arguments mangled or not repreſented in their full Force, followed him in the Order which he himſelf has choſen. But tho' I will not deny him the Praiſe of Wit and Ability, yet upon the moſt impartial Conſideration of his Performance, I cannot help ſaying, that an Author that in any other Cauſe would give himſelf ſuch a Liberty of miſrepreſenting Things,

Things, and endeavour to impoſe upon his Reader at the rate this Gentleman has done, or that would treat any other Book as he has done the Scriptures, would be juſtly regarded, as having forfeited all his Credit and Reputation as a fair and candid Writer; and it certainly aggravates it highly, when it is done with a View to miſlead Perſons in a Matter of the higheſt Conſequence. If you think the Remarks I have offered may be of uſe, I ſhall not repent the Pains I have taken in them. I am with a real Eſteem

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AN

INQUIRY

CONCERNING

FAITH.

Πότε ἂν παρείη ὁ χρόνος οὗτος; καὶ τίς ὁ παιδεύσων; ἥδιστα γὰρ ἄν μοι δοκῶ ἰδεῖν τοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον τίς ἐστιν.

PLAT. Alcib. 2.

Sed ut hoc pulcherrimum esse judicem. VERA *videre, sic pro veris probare.* FALSA *turpissimum est.*

CIC. Academ.

LONDON:

Printed for JOHN and PAUL KNAPTON, at the *Crown* in *Ludgate-street.*
M,DCC,XLIV.

PREFACE.

THE *following Eſſay propoſes to examine the Scripture-Doctrine of* Faith: *to reſcue it from the Miſtakes of* Believers, *and the Artifices of* Unbelievers: *to invite the one to a* free, *the other to a* ſober *Uſe of their Faculties: to prevail, if poſſible, on Both to renounce their reſpective Prejudices; and to recommend, as far as I may, the united Aids of* Reaſon *and* Revelation. *To purſue theſe Points* particularly, *and in the Way of* direct Proof, *would require* more

Time and Pains, and be leſs *likely to take Effect. I have therefore applied my ſelf to the Removal of* Impediments, *and the Solution of* Difficulties: *eſpecially* ſuch *Difficulties, as appear to have been chiefly inſtrumental in retarding the Progreſs of Chriſtian Knowlege.———In what* Method *this Deſign is purſued, will ſufficiently appear from the* Introduction. *At preſent I would only make a preliminary Obſervation on a Point nearly related to the Subject before us.*

IT ſeems of late a prevailing Opinion among the ſpeculative *Part of Mankind, that* Moral Excellence *means nothing more than* Public Utility. ——— *To confirm or confute this Notion, is no Part of my preſent Deſign. But I judge it neceſſary to premiſe, that, on* Suppoſition *of the Truth of it, the* main *Difficulty, conſidered in my* firſt *Section, will appear to be* no *Difficulty at all* ——*If Actions themſelves have no other* Goodneſs, *beſides their* Connection *with* Public Happineſs; *I believe it will be impoſſible to aſſign any Reaſon, why* Opinions *ſhould be thought* incapable *of* Moral Worth. *For ſurely it is of great and general* Importance, *that Men ſhould* judge *rightly in Matters of Religion.———If it be ſaid that*

our

our Judgment is not in our own Power, *and that a* free Choice *is eſſential to* Morality: *I anſwer*, That *Circumſtance is* quite *foreign to the Purpoſe; and the Reaſon is, becauſe the* Freedom *of an Action no way affects it's* Influence *on the Public. If to be* virtuous *and to be* uſeful *are the very ſame Thing*, equal *Degrees of* Utility *muſt unavoidably deſerve* equal Approbation.——*On the ſame Account it is perfectly inſignificant, whether our Actions be* intended *or* unintended; *and even whether they be* Actions, *or* not Actions. *If they have no* abſolute *Worth to recommend them, they can only be valued for the* Good *they produce. Whatever therefore produces the* ſame *Quantity of* Good, *muſt appear* equally *valuable and praiſe-worthy.*

BUT becauſe there are ſome *Perſons who cannot reliſh this* Scheme of Morality; *and becauſe I am willing to vindicate the* Scriptural *Accounts of* Faith, *on all* poſſible *Suppoſitions; I have been forced to proceed upon the almoſt* antiquated *Notion of an* intrinſic *Difference between Good and Evil, and even to ſuppoſe that* Good Actions *have an Excellence* peculiar *to themſelves, which cannot poſſibly belong to any Thing beſides; and which therefore is* intirely *different from their good Influence on Society.*——*Whatever may be*

ſaid

ſaid as to the Truth *of my Opinions, I would not willingly be thought to write without a* Meaning. *Whoever therefore rejects this Notion, as unreal and unintelligible; I ſhall eſteem it a Favour if he will paſs on directly to the* ſecond *Section, without reading or regarding what goes before it.*

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INTRO-

INTRODUCTION.

THE *Adverſaries* of our Religion, and indeed too many of its *Friends*, have, both in primitive and modern Times, laid it under great Diſadvantages, by confounding the Ideas of *Faith* and *Credulity*; which, in reality, are juſt as different, as *Truth* and *Error*, *Wiſdom* and *Folly*. The *former* is, or ought to be, founded on the beſt and moſt ſubſtantial *Reaſons*: the *latter* is only a *Weakneſs* of Mind, which diſpoſes us to *believe* without *any Reaſon at all*. The *former*, as we ſhall ſee hereafter, is derived from the nobleſt *Origin*, and productive of the happieſt *Effects*: the *latter* owes its *Being* to no other Cauſes, but our own Folly, and our own Fault; and yields no other *Fruits*, than Error, and Vice, and Miſery.— In treating therefore on the Subject of *Faith*, it will be requiſite to *explain* it in ſuch a Manner, that it may no longer be *miſtaken* for a Quality ſo extremely unlike it; but, on the contrary, may *appear* to be, what it *really* is in itſelf, the *higheſt* Improvement of Human Underſtanding.

BY *Faith* then in general, I underſtand

that Portion of religious Knowledge, which is drawn from Divine Revelation; and every *Degree* of ſuch *Knowledge* I therefore conſider as a *Degree* of *Faith*. By the *Faith* of a *Chriſtian*, I underſtand *that Faith which is drawn from the Chriſtian Revelation in particular*; always *including* the Belief of this *general* Propoſition, *that the Chriſtian Revelation is of Divine Authority*.—I uſe the Word *Knowlege*, not in a philoſophical, but a popular Senſe; intending only *the Perception of Truth*; without regard to the *Degree* of *Certainty*, or to the *Means* of acquiring it. But I call one Man *more* knowing than another, when his Knowledge either extends to a greater Number of Objects; takes them in with more Clearneſs and Preciſion; or riſes to a ſtronger Aſſurance. Agreeably to this Explication, Men differ from each other in Degrees of *Faith*, in Proportion as their *religious* Knowlege, ſo far as it is derived from Divine Revelation, is more *extenſive*, more *clear*, or more *certain*.—Laſtly, *that* Knowlege I call *religious*, which relates, either *mediately*, or *immediately*, to the *Intercourſe* between *God* and *Man*: I mean to the various *Acts* performed, or to be performed on both Sides; to God's *general* Dealings with *Mankind*, as well as to *particular* Diſpenſations; to the various *States* of Mankind with reſpect to *God*, whether *natural* or *adventitious*; and to the

the various *Obligations*, as well as *Expectations* reſulting from ſuch States.*

KNOWLEGE is no Action. Nothing but Actions can deſerve *Praiſe* or *Blame*. Knowlege therefore cannot *immediately* be the Object of either. This is equally true of religious Knowlege, as of any other Kind; and conſequently *muſt* be extended to that *Portion* of religious Knowlege, which I comprehend under the Denomination of *Faith*.—On the other hand, the Writers of the New Teſtament, and even our Lord himſelf, have *recommended* Faith in the ſtrongeſt Terms; and, to all Appearance, in the very ſame Senſe, in which we have now defined it. We can ſcarce find a Page, either in the Epiſtles or Goſpels, which does not abound in its *Praiſes*. It ſhould ſeem therefore that, in this particular, the Voices of *Reaſon* and *Scripture* are directly *oppoſite*. And from this

 ſeeming

* The learned Biſhop *Pearſon*, after diſtinguiſhing between *Human* Faith and *Divine*, defines the latter to be *an Aſſent unto ſomething as credible, upon the Teſtimony of God*. But I have thought it neceſſary to be a little more *determinate*, with regard to the *Object* of Faith: Firſt, by *confining* it to *religious* Truths; and ſecondly, by *extending* it to *all* revealed Truths, of that Nature. In the *former* of theſe Alterations, I preſume I am juſtified by the common Acceptation of the Word: and as to the latter, I need only obſerve, that my preſent Enquiry does not relate to the Belief of *ſingle* Propoſitions, but to the *whole* Faith of a Chriſtian.—I have uſed the Word *Knowlege*, inſtead of *Aſſent*, becauſe the former implies the *Truth* of what is believed, the latter may ſignify *indifferently* either a *right*, or an *erroneous* Judgment.

ſeeming Oppoſition both Reaſon and Scripture have ſuffered extremely *. Some Perſons have thought it neceſſary to relinquiſh Scripture, becauſe determined to adhere to Reaſon; and many more to give up Reaſon, that they might not be led to oppoſe Scripture. In ſhort, *rational* and *irrational* have been thought on both ſides ſynonymous Terms with *Infidel* and *Believer*.

To extricate ourſelves from this Difficulty, it is neceſſary to obſerve, that the very *ſame* Thing may in *different Reſpects*, and on *different Accounts*, both *deſerve* and *not deſerve* Commendation. That *Actions* only are the proper and immediate Objects of *Praiſe*, is, in a *moral* Senſe, indiſputably true. But neither is this the *only* kind of Praiſe; nor is *this* Praiſe itſelf uſually confined to its *immediate* Objects. Whatever Qualities either moral or *natural*, are in *any* reſpect truly *valuable*; are always eſteemed *praiſe-worthy*. Not only ſo, but, by an eaſy and common Figure of Speech, Things may frequently become the Objects of Praiſe, which have *in themſelves* no Value at all; becauſe they may *derive* a Value from *other* Things, to which they ſtand nearly related. Sometimes we look *upwards* to the *Cauſes* from which they proceed; ſometimes *downwards* to the *Effects*

* This Oppoſition has been much *heightened* by that Confuſion of *Faith* and *Credulity* abovementioned.

Effects and Conſequences which flow from them; ſometimes as it were *ſideways*, to an *accidental* Connection they may have with *other* Cauſes, ſo that the *latter* cannot produce ſome valuable Operation, unleſs the *former* be preſuppoſed.

SOMETHING of this may conveniently be illuſtrated by a very obvious Example.—Should any Perſon write a Book in Praiſe of *Learning*, he would ſurely be thought no Enemy to *Reaſon*; eſpecially if by Learning he meant nothing more but ſound and ſubſtantial *Knowlege*. And yet ſuch a Perſon may be ſaid to contradict Reaſon, by praiſing that which is no *Action*; and which therefore, Reaſon tells us, cannot be the Object of Praiſe. But the Reply is manifeſt—Tho' Knowlege, conſidered in itſelf, be no *moral Virtue*, yet is it in many reſpects truly *valuable:* valuable, becauſe it preſuppoſes a *right Conduct* of the Underſtanding, and that Conduct involves in it the Exerciſe of many *Virtues*; valuable, becauſe, in its own *Nature*, the *Means* of procuring very great Advantages, both to the Poſſeſſor and to other Men; valuable, as it may *accidentally* be made the *Condition*, without which *other* Means of promoting our Intereſt would either be *leſs* effectual, or in ſome Caſes entirely *ineffectual*.—Theſe Things may, in ſome Degree, be truly affirmed of Knowlege in *general*; but with

ſtill greater Truth of *religious* Knowlege, and eſpecially that *Part* of it, which is the Subject of our preſent Inquiry.

THUS are we brought back to the Point, from whence this Illuſtration took its Riſe. I mean that *Faith*, tho' no *Action*, may yet, in *ſome Reſpects*, and on *ſome Accounts*, be very properly the Object of *Praiſe*. From whence it follows, that the ſuppoſed Inconſiſtency on this Head between *Scripture* and *Reaſon* is much leſs manifeſt, than is frequently imagined. We can by no means conclude from this *general* Poſition, *that Faith is praiſed by the Writers of the New Teſtament*, whether thoſe Writers are conſiſtent or inconſiſtent with *Right Reaſon*.

BUT we muſt not ſtop here.—Tho' Faith ſhould be allowed a Title to *ſome* Kinds and Degrees of Praiſe; yet is it not repreſented, in Scripture, under *falſe* Colours? Is it not dreſſed up in ſuch Characters, to which it neither has nor *can* have any Pretence? In ſhort, is it poſſible to acquit the ſacred Authors, amidſt the frequent Commendations they beſtow upon it, from a *Miſapplication* in the *Kind* of Praiſe, and a *Profuſion* in the Degree of it?—That we may be able to judge how far ſuch a Vindication is practicable, our Inquiry muſt be more *particular*. To collect all the ſcattered Paſſages on this Subject, and allot to each its Explication and Defence,

Defence, would be an endleſs, and perhaps an *uſeleſs* Labour. It will be ſufficient to form a few general *Claſſes*; to ſome or other of which all particular Texts may eaſily be referred: and to conſider theſe diſtinctly and ſeparately. If this be *not* ſufficient, I preſume it will not be owing to the Impropriety of the *Method*, but to Defects or Miſtakes in the *Proſecution* of it.

AGREEABLY therefore to the Principles already laid down, I proceed to inquire in what Reſpects, and on what Accounts, Faith is recommended to us in Scripture?—Now the different Recommendations, which are given it, may, if I miſtake not, be reduced to *three*, *viz.* its EXCELLENCE, as *a Moral Virtue*; its ADVANTAGE and SUFFICIENCY, as *a Means of Salvation*; and laſtly, its NECESSITY, as *a Condition of the Goſpel-Covenant*. If I can maintain it in Poſſeſſion of this *threefold* Character, I ſhall not be charged with *derogating* from the high Encomiums, which are beſtowed upon it in *Scripture*; if I eſtabliſh all the Parts of this Character on a *rational* Foundation, I ought not to be accuſed of *deſerting Reaſon*; and laſtly, if Reaſon and Scripture are ſhewn to be both on the *ſame* Side, the latter is then compleatly vindicated.

AN INQUIRY CONCERNING FAITH.

SECT. I.

IT has already been admitted that *Faith*, when conſidered *in itſelf*, I mean abſtractedly from its *Cauſes* and *Conſequences*, cannot be ranked in the Number of the VIRTUES. Its Value therefore, in a *moral* Senſe, *muſt* be derived from ſomething *without* itſelf.—But ſhall we limit the Idea of Moral Excellence, to thoſe Objects which are *intrinſically* good? Shall no Quality be eſteemed *praiſe-worthy*, beſides thoſe which have an *inherent* Value?—If the Conceptions and Language of the Generality of Mankind were ſtrictly juſt and *philoſophical*, ſuch a Limitation might perhaps take place; and it is equally

equally true, that all *Figures* of *Speech* muſt be utterly baniſhed from Converſation and Writing. For, according to this *rigorous* Procedure, they are only ſo many *Miſapplitions* of Words and Ideas. The *Metaphor*, upon a very ſlender Reſemblance, ſhifts and changes the *Properties* of Things; the *Metonymy* jumbles *Cauſe* and *Effect*, *Subject* and *Adjunct*; the *Synecdoche* confounds the *Whole* with its *Parts*: and ſo on of all the reſt. When theſe *Improprieties* are all out of uſe, it will *then* be reaſonable to confine our Praiſe to the *immediate* Objects of Praiſe; that is, to the *Determinations* of the *Will*. But while our ways of ſpeaking continue what they *are*, and what they always *have been*; nothing can be more obvious, or more natural, than to tranſfer the Excellence of the *Cauſe* to the *Effect*, and *v. v.* that of the *Effect* to the *Cauſe*.—The uſe of this Figure in *moral* Subjects is neither leſs proper, nor leſs *frequent*, than in Subjects of any other kind. So far from it, that a total *Diſuſe* of it would overturn at once our whole *moral Language*. So that whoever denies the Excellence of *Faith*, on no other Grounds than what I am here oppoſing; muſt, on the very *ſame* Grounds, deny the Worth of *all* good Qualities whatever. I ſay good *Qualities*: by which I underſtand good *Affections*; good *Habits*; good *Diſpoſitions* of Mind. *All* theſe

theſe *derive* their Excellence from the particular Series of good *Actions*, by which they are produced, improved, and cultivated: and yet this *derivative* Excellence is univerſally eſteemed and acknowleged a juſt Title to Approbation and Praiſe. Thoſe two great Principles of all Duty, the *Love of God* and our *Neighbour*, are, if conſidered *abſtractedly*, utterly incapable of *moral* Worth. For Love is an *Affection* of the Mind; and *Affections* are not *Actions*. But becauſe theſe Affections are the *Reſult* of ſome Virtues, and the *Foundation* of many more; becauſe they are the natural *Effect*, and the probable *Means* of Right *Conduct*: they aſſume to *themſelves* thoſe Praiſes, to which they generally *preſuppoſe*, and frequently *produce* a juſt Title.—May we not then maintain that *Faith* is a *moral Virtue*; if we are able to ſhew that it ſprings from the nobleſt *Cauſes*, and is productive of the moſt valuable *Conſequences*? That it is, in ſhort, the *Effect*, and the *Ground* of Virtue?—Nothing ſurely will hinder us from applying the ſame Figure of Speech in *both* Caſes. But then we ſhall be forced to *acknowlege*, what has been too often either *denied* or *overlook'd*, that if Faith may *accidentally* ſubſiſt; without *thoſe Cauſes*, and *thoſe Effects*: ſuch a Faith is, *morally* ſpeaking, of no Value at all. Juſt as an *innate* Benevolence, or a Benevolence *accidentally* acquired, or a Benevolence which

which is *reſtrained* from producing its genuine *Fruits*, ought not to be honoured with the Name of *Virtue*.

I would willingly eſtabliſh the Force of my *Concluſion*, before I proceed to conſider more particularly thoſe *Aſſertions* on which it is *founded*.—Now for the effectual *Support* of the Concluſion, nothing further ſeems to be neceſſary, than to vindicate the *Propriety* of praiſing Faith, on account of an Excellence *not its own*: to *confirm* at large, what we have already *aſſerted*, that it ſtands exactly upon the *ſame* Footing with *all other* Good Qualities; and particularly with thoſe *fundamental* Virtues, the *Love* of *God*, and our *Neighbour*.—To this End, it may be proper to remove a very material *Objection*, which will naturally occur to a thinking Man, on peruſing what has been here advanced.

For may it not be urged, *That the Inſtances produced are by no Means parallel to the Caſe before us? That right* Affections *naturally flow from right* Conduct, *but that no Degree of Care in our Purſuits after* Knowlege, *can ever be ſufficient to enſure our Succeſs? That on the contrary, an exact and ſcrupulous Inquiry may, in numberleſs and obvious Caſes, be productive of* Error, *as well as* Truth? *and that* Error *itſelf would, in theſe Inſtances, have the ſame Title to the Name of* Virtue, *which is here pleaded in Behalf of* true

true Faith?—It is impoſſible to anſwer Objections of this Kind, without running into a Controverſy, which, in a great Meaſure, will be only verbal. But even a *verbal* Controverſy may, in this Caſe, be of real uſe. For, unleſs it be perfectly conſiſtent with the common *Forms* of *Speech*, to beſtow the higheſt Commendations on Faith, for the ſake of a *borrowed* Excellence; it may be thought that our Saviour conſidered bare *Aſſent*, as a Thing in its *own* Nature *praiſe-worthy*. Than which a greater Abſurdity cannot be imputed to him. Let us therefore examine, with this View, what Force there is in the Objections propoſed? and whether *Faith* have not as fair a Title to our Praiſe, as the *other* Virtues compared with it?

THAT the Inſtances produced are in *all* reſpects *parallel*, is a Point I am not concerned to maintain. It is ſufficient for my Purpoſe, that they agree in *thoſe* Particulars, in which the courſe of my Argument *requires* it. I mean that *religious* and *benevolent Affections* can only be entitled to the Name of *Virtues* on account of a *derivative* Excellence. They are acquired by a Series of virtuous *Actions*, and are *therefore* eſteemed and called *Virtues*. In *this* reſpect they *agree* with Faith. In *another* reſpect they are *ſuppoſed* to *differ*. But that, I preſume, no way affects the Point before us. For, ſuppoſing

poſing a Quality to be *virtuouſly* acquired, what avails it, whether it was the *neceſſary* Conſequence, or only the *probable* Reſult of Right Conduct? And yet this is the *ſole* Point of Difference, which *can* be alleged in the preſent Caſe.—A careful and conſcientious Endeavour to obtain a ſound and rational Faith, tho' it *naturally* tends to make us *wiſe Men*, may yet, thro' a Concurrence of *accidental* Impediments, be altogether inſufficient for that Purpoſe. But how does it follow from hence, that Faith is *no* Virtue? Whoever attempts to draw ſuch a Concluſion, muſt firſt prove that all *moral* Improvements, of what kind ſoever, are abſolutely and entirely in our own *Power*; than which nothing can be more falſe, or more contrary to univerſal Experience. Every *Capacity*, every *Age*, every *Station* in Life has *peculiar* Advantages and Diſadvantages in this reſpect: almoſt every *Individual* is ſeparately furniſhed with Means and Opportunities which others want.

But to put this Matter out of all doubt, I believe it will appear, to a conſiderate Inquirer, that this is actually the Caſe in the Inſtances *alleged*; and by conſequence, that the *Parallel* holds *quite thro'*. I am not afraid to affirm that the *Love of God* and our *Neighbour*, in that Degree of *Perfection* which the Goſpel recommends, are not *univerſally* attain-

attainable; are not in *all* Men the *neceſſary* Effects of Right *Conduct*. It cannot, I think, be queſtioned, that very many Perſons, thro' a Defect in their natural Conſtitution, are not capable of *Affections* at all; or at leaſt in ſo cold and languiſhing a Degree, as can by no means come up to thoſe *Characters* of *Love*, which are laid down in the New Teſtament.——But ſetting this aſide, Men's Progreſs in theſe and all other Virtues will unavoidably depend on their Progreſs in *Knowlege*. For, ſuppoſing, what the Objection allows us to ſuppoſe, that *Sincerity* is not inconſiſtent either with *Ignorance* or *Error*; ſuppoſing that an honeſt and virtuous Man ſhould yet fall into great *Miſtakes*; whether relating to the *Deity*, or his *Fellow Creatures*, or the reſpective *Duties* he owes to *both*; how is it poſſible he ſhould *love* them as he ought?—He who will aſſert the Poſſibility of this, will find himſelf obliged to maintain, that theſe Evangelical Virtues were practiſed in as great Perfection by the *Greeks* and *Romans*, nay, by the moſt ignorant and *barbarous* Nations, as by the Followers of *Chriſt* himſelf; *thoſe*, I mean, who make the *beſt* uſe of the Revelation they enjoy. If he will not maintain this, he muſt then impute the Deficience *univerſally* to no other Cauſe but *wrong Conduct*. If this too be given up, it remains that *right Conduct* may, in numberleſs Inſtances, fail

fail of producing *right Affections.* Theſe Affections therefore are only the *probable* Effect of virtuous Actions; and therefore the *Inſtances* are ſtill *parallel.*——A Man *ſincerely* virtuous may, not only in Point of *Faith*, but in *many* other Reſpects, fall ſhort of *Evangelical Perfection.*

It is then no Objection to what we have been ſaying, that many Perſons want the *Means* of arriving at a true Faith: that ſome have not *Leiſure*, or *Capacity*, to enter upon a rational Inquiry; that others, who are Maſters of *both*, are yet frequently hindered by *unavoidable Prejudices*, from the Diſcovery of the Truth. This, I ſay, can never prove that thoſe who are bleſſed with more *favourable* Opportunities, may not deſerve great Praiſe for making a right *Uſe* of them; or that ſome Part of the Credit may not be *derived* on the *Faith itſelf* thus acquired.

But an exact and ſcrupulous Inquiry may frequently be productive of Error. *And is* Error *too a moral Virtue?*—I anſwer, this is a great Miſtake. An impartial Inquiry may ſometimes *terminate* in Error; but that it is the *Cauſe* of Error, I utterly deny. If it frequently happens in our Search after Truth, that we embrace the Shadow inſtead of the Subſtance; this Deluſion is by no means to be aſcribed to our *Diligence* in ſearching: but to thoſe *Impediments*, whatever they were,

by

by which this Diligence was rendered *fruitleſs*; to *Incapacity*, to unavoidable *Prejudice*, and perhaps not ſeldom to a miſtaken Deference for *Authority*. Many more are the Cauſes of Error; but a free and impartial Inquiry is *not* the Cauſe of it. And therefore, whatever *Merit* there may be in ſuch an Inquiry, the Errors themſelves can have no Title to it.—Let me juſt add, that a rational Search is not only naturally *productive* of Knowlege; but, in ſome degree, always *produces* it. Let other Circumſtances be ſuppoſed equal, and I appeal to the warmeſt Adverſary, whether a *careful Inquirer* will not be univerſally poſſeſſed of more *ſound* Knowledge, than a Man who *forbears* to inquire at *all*, or a *negligent* and *partial* Inquirer?—If this be evident, I hope I may be allowed to affirm, that a diligent Search after Truth is the Source of *Knowlege*, not of *Error*; and, by conſequence, I am freed from the Abſurdity of ſuppoſing Error to be a *moral Virtue*.

How far this Notion of a *rational* Faith is agreeable to the Accounts contained in *Scripture*, will be more conveniently conſidered afterwards. It will firſt be requiſite to explain more diſtinctly thoſe *Grounds* and *Cauſes*, from which I would *derive* it's *moral Excellence*. And if it appear, upon a fair Inquiry, to *be*, as I have *ſuppoſed*, the Offspring of *Virtue*; I preſume we may ſafely join in

it's *Praiſes*, without incurring the leaſt Suſpicion of yielding a *Tribute* which cannot reaſonably be demanded. At leaſt the Objection now brought can be no Bar to ſuch a Claim: nor do we diſcover any ſufficient Reaſon, why in *this*, as well as in *other* Inſtances, the Excellence of the *Cauſe* may not be transferred to the *Effect*.

KNOWLEGE in *general* may be ſought and obtained on various and different *Motives*. Not only a Love for *Truth*; an honeſt Intention to regulate our *own* Conduct; or a Diſpoſition to be uſeful to *Mankind*: but alſo an *Oſtentation* of Parts and Learning; a Deſire of *qualifying* ourſelves for *lucrative* Employments: or poſſibly of *circumventing* other Men by the Force of ſuperior Diſcernment and Cunning. We are not therefore to wonder, that a Quality of ſuch doubtful Origin, however laborioufly acquired, is not uſually eſteemed *virtuous*. I ſay not *uſually*; for the beſt Moraliſts among the Heathens have judged *otherwiſe*; attending perhaps to the Excellence of the *Means*, or the Goodneſs of the *Effects*, rather than the Uprightneſs of the *Motives*.—But however this ſhall be determined; that *Part* of Knowlege which we are now conſidering is liable to no ſuch Objection. No Man, I believe, ever examined into the Doctrines and Precepts of *Religion*, with ſolemn Care, and ſtrict Impartiality, on ſuch Principles

Principles as are here ſuppoſed: partly becauſe all the Views of Honour and Intereſt are generally to be anſwered at a much cheaper Rate; and partly becauſe every Step he took in the Diſquiſition *itſelf*, would either *diſcourage* him from proceeding further, or induce him to proceed upon *better* Motives.——But if a *few* Exceptions are to be *allowed* (and *many*, I think, cannot be *demanded*;) theſe, I preſume, are ſufficiently provided for, by a Conceſſion already made, *That Faith purely accidental can have no Merit at all.*

ACCORDING to the *natural* Progreſs of Things, the Motive for *ſeeking* religious Knowlege is a conſcientious Deſire of diſcharging our *Duty:* the Means of *obtaining* it are *Humility*, *Impartiality*, *Probity*, *Diligence*. The *Motive* can hardly ſubſiſt, but in a ſincere and honeſt Mind: the *Means* can never be put into Execution, without a ſteady Adherence to Virtue, in Oppoſition to the ſtrongeſt Temptations. Every Degree therefore of *religious Knowlege* implies a proportionable Degree of *Moral Goodneſs*.——If an honeſt *Heart* have a natural Tendency to lead Men into a right *Underſtanding*; the *latter*, wherever it is obſerved, may fairly be conſidered as an *Effect* and *Indication* of the *former*.

BUT the Qualifications above-mentioned, for the Acquiſition of religious Knowlege, require to be a little unfolded; that their *Con-*

nection with Faith may more diſtinctly appear. ——By *Humility* I would at preſent underſtand a juſt Senſe of our own *Weakneſs*; either the Weakneſs of Human Underſtanding in *general*, or of our *own* in *particular*: a conſtant Reflection how liable we *all* are to be deceived and impoſed on, how frequently we *ourſelves* have been led into Error, and how little Reaſon we have to maintain with *Confidence* any Opinions whatſoever; thoſe only excepted, which are founded on *demonſtrative* Evidence, and which are *improperly* called *Opinions*. With whatever Degree of *Probability* Things may appear, the Man who is truly *humble* will always bear about him this Reflection, that it is *poſſible* he may be miſtaken. And, when he conſiders the *many* Inſtances, in which he has been *ſtrongly* perſuaded upon *weak* and *erroneous* Principles; he will learn to *ſuſpect* his own Deciſions, and to *diſtruſt* his own Judgment in *all* Caſes that come before him.——I preſume it will be needleſs to prove, that *Humility*, thus underſtood, implies in it the Exerciſe of *Virtue*. That it naturally leads to the Diſcovery of *Truth*, and eſpecially of *religious* Truth, will eaſily appear; if it be conſidered, that the *contrary* Diſpoſition ſteels the Mind againſt Conviction. He who is not accuſtomed to *doubt* of his own Abilities, will come with an invincible Prejudice to the Hearing of *new* Doctrines.

Doctrines. He will have no Thoughts of informing *himſelf*; but bend all his Pains and Skill to the Confutation of *others*: and he who hears with a Reſolution of *confuting*, will find it no difficult Matter to confute *any Thing*.—But a cautious and ſuſpicious Temper of Mind, ſuſpicious I mean of *itſelf*, and it's *own* Sufficiency, naturally puts a Man upon his *Guard*; teaches him to *aſſert* without *Confidence*, and to *liſten* without *Prejudice*. It gives him a juſt and proper Deference for the Sentiments of *others*; and makes him at all Times ready to receive *Truth*, from *whomſoever* it may come.—This is more remarkably true, when applied to *religious* Opinions; becauſe theſe, of all others, are generally *embraced* upon the *ſlighteſt* Grounds, and *retained* with the greateſt *Obſtinacy*. The Uſefulneſs therefore of Humility is here more *clearly* diſcerned; becauſe it is more *evidently*, and more *frequently* wanted.

A MAN is ſaid to inquire *impartially*, when he comes to the Inquiry, without any *preconceived* Opinions on *either* Side of the Queſtion.—Strictly ſpeaking, this is a Qualification not to be expected; but, I preſume, it will not be denied, that for a Man to approach as *near* to it as he *can*, is a right and *virtuous* Conduct.—Is it not equally manifeſt that ſuch a Conduct is in ſome Degree *neceſſary* for the Attainment of *Knowlege*? Do

not *Prejudices* naturally and unavoidably throw a Miſt upon the Underſtanding? Do they not wonderfully illuſtrate the Arguments on *one* Side; and make us loſe Sight of the *contrary* Arguments?—Let it only be conſidered that to judge *rightly*, we muſt firſt have taken a View of the *whole* Caſe; that ſuch a View is not to be had, if we turn our Eyes only *one* Way; and that all *preconceived* Opinions are ſure to take off our Attention from Reaſons which, we are already determined, neither have, nor *can* have any Weight. Unleſs theſe Reaſons could operate upon the Mind without being *perceived* and *underſtood*; it would be abſurd to expect that ſuch an Inquiry ſhould ever turn to any good Account. —But this *Impartiality* is *peculiarly* needful in our *religious* Inquiries. And the Reaſon is obvious. For here Prejudices are carefully *infuſed* into us from our very *Nativity*; and ſo, taking Root in young and tender Minds, are never afterwards to be plucked up, without great Care and extraordinary Prudence. Hence it is that in all Ages and Nations the religious Opinions of Parents are handed down to their Children; and perhaps not one in ten Thouſand has the Wiſdom or the Courage to reject them; however abſurd and erroneous.—This I ſay makes it abſolutely neceſſary for every ſincere Inquirer, to exert himſelf with the utmoſt Vigilance, in weeding out of his Mind all

all *Principles*, which he has derived from any other Source than the Uſe and Application of his own *Reaſon*.*

By *Probity* I intend a *Diſregard* to Motives of private *Paſſion*, or ſecular *Intereſt*.—That it is *reaſonable* to exclude all Thoughts of this Nature from our religious Deliberations, no Man, I believe, ever denied. Nor ſhall I need to uſe many Words to make it appear that ſuch an Excluſion is *quite* requiſite for the Attainment of religious *Knowlege*. In moſt other Parts of Learning it has indeed no Place: but *here* it is of the laſt Importance.—Whoever ſits down to chuſe his *Religion* under the Influence of ſome prevailing *Paſſion*, or with a Proſpect of *ſecular Advantage* full

* I am ſenſible the Method here recommended of a cautious Examination into eſtabliſhed Doctrines will not ſuit the Taſte of thoſe Perſons, who have formed their Notions by *Faſhion*, rather than *Reaſon*. A pertinacious Adherence to *received* Opinions has been too often thought the moſt *eſſential* Part of Religion, and the high Road to *Perfection*. But Experience and Reflection have in ſome Meaſure opened our Eyes; and taught us that, in order to believe rightly, we muſt in the firſt Place *purify* our *Hearts*: I mean, that we muſt *purge away* thoſe *Prejudices*, which, above all Things, defeat our Studies and diſappoint our Inquiries; that we muſt throw off, as much as poſſible, all Attachment either to our *Superiors* or our *Anceſtors*; and endeavour, for a Time, at leaſt, to *forget* that we are Members of the *beſt* Church upon *Earth*. Without this *neceſſary* Precaution, we may indeed be *zealous* in her *Defence*; but the Zeal of an *Indian* for his favourite *Idol* will be equally *rational*, and equally *meritorious*.—He only is a *true* Friend to this, or any other, Eſtabliſhment; whoſe *Friendſhip* is the Effect of *Conviction*, and whoſe *Conviction* has been drawn from him *merely* by the *Weight* of *Evidence*.

in his View; has no Chance for ſeeing any Evidence, which would interfere with the Accompliſhment of his Deſires. *Facilè omnes credimus quod volumus* is a Maxim atteſted by univerſal Experience. It is therefore an indiſpenſible Means of *Knowlege* to ſhut our Eyes, as much as poſſible, againſt theſe Objects; and not ſuffer them to come in our Way, whenever we are ſeeking after *ſuch* Truths, as may *happen* to be inconſiſtent with the Poſſeſſion of them.

WHAT I mean by *Diligence* needs no Explanation. All Knowlege requires *Labour*: and Labour, directed to a right End, is *Virtue*.—If any Perſon imagine *religious* Knowlege is to be had at a *cheaper* Rate, I preſume he is greatly miſtaken. Other Circumſtances being ſuppoſed equal, a Man's *Improvements* cannot but bear an exact Proportion to his *Endeavours*.—We may therefore conclude that a clear and extenſive *Knowlege* of Divine Things, ſupported by firm and rational Proof, is rarely to be acquired without great *Virtue*: and that every *Degree* of ſuch Knowlege infers a proportionable Degree of *Care*, both in the Conduct of the *Underſtanding* itſelf, and in the Uſe and Application of all fit *Means* for it's continual Improvement and Information.

I FEAR it will be thought that, in this Inquiry, I have long ſince loſt Sight of my *Subject*.

Subject. Let us therefore try, before we proceed any farther, how theſe Things tend to the Support and Eſtabliſhment of the main Point.—I *undertook* to ſhew that the *Faith* of a *Chriſtian* is *deſervedly* repreſented to us, in Scripture, under the Notion of a *Moral Virtue*. I have ſhewn, *in Fact*, that this Appellation may juſtly be given to *all* religious Knowlege; on account of the *Excellence* of thoſe *Cauſes*, by which it is naturally and generally produced. But now this *univerſal* Concluſion manifeſtly *includes* the *particular* Propoſition, in the Proof of which I was engaged. It does ſo on *Suppoſition* of the * *Truth* of Chriſtianity; and I am not now arguing, nor diſpoſed to argue, on any *other* Suppoſition. It may therefore be already concluded that Reaſon and Scripture are ſo far perfectly agreed.

BUT I mean not to rely wholly on theſe *general* Reflections. It will certainly be requiſite, on many Accounts, to make a more diſtinct

* It cannot ſurely be expected that I ſhould prove the Reaſonableneſs of believing a *falſe* Religion. If the *Evidences* of Chriſtianity are inſufficient, certainly the *Faith* of a Chriſtian deſerves no Praiſe. What I am concerned to maintain is only this; that *ſuppoſing* thoſe Evidences to be *otherwiſe* unexceptionable, the Commendations beſtowed on *Faith* will not *diminiſh* their Weight: will not afford any *Objection* againſt a Religion well ſupported by ſolid and rational *Proof*.—But I ſhall freely own that we cannot be *more* certain of the *Moral Excellence* of Faith, than we are of the *Truth* of our Religion itſelf.

diſtinct *Application* of theſe Principles to the *Faith of a Chriſtian* in particular.—And here it is obvious to remark that, if religious Doctrines, of *whatever* Kind, deſerve and require a careful Examination; it muſt be of the utmoſt Importance to inform ourſelves rightly concerning *Revealed Religion*: that in ſearching diligently after this Information there will be freſh Room, and greater Scope, for the Exerciſe of thoſe *Moral Virtues*, which have been already enumerated: and that, if the *Merit* of our religious Knowlege be either meaſured by it's Extent or it's Certainty, a rational Belief of the Doctrines of *Chriſtianity* will be in an eminent Degree *praiſe-worthy*.

In order to conceive more clearly the Force and Truth of this Obſervation, and the better to prevent *Miſconſtruction*; it may be proper to diſtinguiſh, in this Place, between a *general* and *previous* Belief of the *Divine Origin* of our Religion, and a *ſubſequent* Belief of it's *particular Doctrines*. Theſe Caſes being, in a very material Point, eſſentially different.

That *Jeſus Chriſt was a true Prophet, commiſſioned by God to declare his Will to Mankind*, is a Doctrine we are taught from our very Childhood. Education and Intereſt conſpire to fix it in our Minds; and ſcarce ſuffer the Generality of Chriſtians to entertain the leaſt Doubt or Scruple about it. Indeed the preſent Age has been more fruitful of Examples

amples to the contrary, than perhaps any that went before it. But even ſtill it muſt be acknowleged, that Men's *Prejudices* and *Prepoſſeſſions* are far more on the *Side* of Chriſtianity, than they are *againſt* it. Unleſs we ſhould ſuppoſe, that all theſe are ſufficiently *ballanced*, by the invincible *Repugnance* which will always ſubſiſt, between the *Duties* of our *Religion*, and the *Gratification* of our *Paſſions*: What Weight this may have in determining the Judgments of *ſome* Perſons cannot eaſily be aſcertained. I pretend not to build any Thing upon it, and am content to allow for Argument's Sake, that, in theſe *later Ages* of *Chriſtianity*, the Belief of this *general* Propoſition does not preſuppoſe the Exerciſe of *Virtue*; and, by conſequence, ought not to be conſidered as a Quality *morally excellent*.

But then I ſhall ſtill inſiſt that the Knowlege of *particular Doctrines* greatly depends on our *own* Conduct; and, by conſequence, may juſtly be conſidered as an Object of Approbation and Praiſe.—Among the various Sects, and Denominations of Chriſtians, it requires great *Care*, and great *Integrity*, to make a rational Choice: And it is a ſtrong *Preſumption* of Virtue, if we have been able to arrive at the *true* Faith, in ſpite of all the Impediments, which *Education* and *Intereſt* may have thrown in our Way. This at leaſt will be

be allowed to hold true, by a Majority of Readers, in reſpect of all *other* Chriſtians, but thoſe who have had the peculiar Happineſs to be born within the Pale of our *Eſtabliſhed Church*.—It will, if I miſtake not, go ſtill farther. For tho' all our Prejudices be ſuppoſed to lie on the Side of *Truth*; yet this can only affect thoſe who *ſearch* after Truth. We may, if we pleaſe, continue ſupinely *ignorant*; and, while we profeſs ourſelves Members of the *Church* of *England*, be utter Strangers to *Chriſtianity* itſelf.—He who only *believes* in *Chriſt*, without attending to the *Doctrines* he taught, has made but a very ſmall Proficiency in Chriſtian *Faith*. And every Degree beyond this, generally ſpeaking, depends upon *ourſelves*. I ſay *generally*; for it is not *univerſally* true, that Men are utterly deſtitute of a Chriſtian *Education*.

NOT only *Ignorance* but *Error* too is conſiſtent with a Profeſſion of adhering to the *Eſtabliſhed Church*.—Were the *Church herſelf* exempt from all *Poſſibility* of Error, yet this would be no Security to her *Members*. Creeds, Confeſſions, and Articles of Faith will always be liable to Variety of *Interpretation*; and whatever is *variouſly* interpreted, *muſt* be *wrong* interpreted. Accordingly we find in Fact, that the moſt *peremptory* Deciſions have had very little Effect in procuring or promoting *Uniformity* of *Opinion*. It muſt not be imagined,

imagined, that, becauſe we all agree in one Form of *Words*, we are therefore agreed in one common *Faith*. Different Divines of our *own* Church have repreſented Chriſtianity in ſuch different and even *oppoſite* Lights; that ſcarce any two Syſtems of Religion can have leſs Similitude, than the Explications, which are given us of one and the *ſame* Syſtem. We have therefore great Room to exerciſe the Virtues above-mentioned; in *comparing* and conſidering theſe contrary Schemes, and *determining* according to *Evidence*.—Sure I am, the *more* virtuous we are, the *better* we ſhall *underſtand* true Chriſtianity.

But if a *general* Belief in *Chriſt* is acknowleged to be void of *moral Worth*, it ſhould ſeem that the *principal* Difficulty yet remains unanſwered. For are there not various Paſſages in Scripture, in which this *previous* Faith is ſtrongly, and *peculiarly* commended?—I freely own it. But I maintain at the ſame Time, that the Conceſſion lately made no way affects *that Commendation*. The Perſons, whoſe Faith is there extolled, were new *Converts* to Chriſtianity; Men, whom neither *Prejudices*, nor *Authority*, nor *Intereſt*, had been able to hinder from *ſeeing* and *acknowleging*, that *Chriſt Jeſus* was the Son of God. A Caſe, of all others, where the Merit of Faith appears in the ſtrongeſt Light; becauſe

it

it moſt *plainly* preſuppoſes a *fair* and *honeſt* Inquiry.

It cannot ſurely be thought neceſſary, that I ſhould either cite particular Paſſages, or allege diſtinct Arguments, to prove that this is a true Repreſentation of the Caſe. The Thing ſpeaks itſelf. For, to inſtance only in *one* Particular, *all* the Chriſtians then in Being, when theſe Commendations were given, *muſt* have been converted either from *Judaiſm* or *Heatheniſm*. Either then they had the *common* Prejudices of *Jews* and *Heathens*, or they *had not*. If they *had*; it was an Argument of Virtue, that they *guarded* againſt their Influence: if they *had not*; it was an Argument of perhaps yet *greater* Virtue, that they had found Means to eſcape the general Contagion, and preſerve their Underſtandings pure, and undefiled, and fit for the Reception of *Truth*. So that in either Caſe they were proper Objects of *Approbation* and *Favour*. It cannot therefore be wondered, that Chriſt and his Apoſtles conſidered and *treated* them as ſuch.* —But when we add to this, that *particular Perſons*

* This may be *one* Reaſon why the miraculous Cures performed by our Bleſſed Lord were, in ſome Caſes, *confined* to *Believers*.—But the *chief* Reaſon ſeems to have been this. The main End of Miracles was the *Confirmation* of our Saviour's *Miſſion*: from whence it follows that miraculous Operations were always to be reſtrained in *ſuch* a Manner, as might beſt anſwer *this End*. As therefore the Powers of *working* Miracles were only communicated to *Diſciples*; ſo the *paſſive* Power of *receiving*

Perſons muſt have been liable to *peculiar* Prejudices; and when we conſider that *Authority* as well as *Intereſt* ſtrongly drew them the *ſame* Way: we ſhall want no further Evidence of the Point in queſtion.—If more *were* wanted, it might be obſerved that a great Part of the Praiſes, which we have here endeavoured to vindicate, were given by Him, who *knew what was in Man:* who was intimately acquainted with the moſt ſecret Workings of the human *Heart.* In all Reaſon therefore we ought to conclude, that, in thoſe Inſtances where he commended *Faith*, he did it upon a *certain* Knowlege of the *good Principles*, from whence it proceeded.

ONE Objection remains to be anſwered, before I conclude this Head; an Objection drawn from the Scripture itſelf.—According to the Explication now given, the more *rational* our Faith is, and the more *excellent.* But we are told that Scripture aſcribes the chief Merit to a Faith *not* founded on *Reaſon*; from whence it follows that the Account given is altogether wide of the Purpoſe.—I anſwer, the Aſſertion is abſolutely and univerſally *falſe.* Not a ſingle Paſſage occurs in the New Teſtament, where any Man is commended

receiving their beneficial Influence was often joined with *Faith* in *Chriſt.* By this *Appropriation* of ſupernatural Privileges, it was made ſtill more evident, to impartial Spectators, that the Religion of Jeſus was ſupported and *favoured* by the great *Author* of Miracles.

mended for *believing* without *Evidence.* Whoever thinks fit to maintain the contrary, it will be incumbent upon him to ſhew, either, 1*ſt*, That Prophecies and Miracles afford *no* rational Evidence; or, 2*dly*, That Faith is commended, in a Perſon who was *unacquainted* with this Evidence; or, 3*dly*, That thoſe who *leaſt* regarded it are *moſt* commended in Holy Scripture. The contrary of all which is manifeſtly true.

THE ſole Foundation of this Objection appears to me to be *this.*—Men are ſometimes commended for believing, not upon *inſufficient* Grounds, or *without* Inquiry; but upon *leſs* Evidence, than others had demanded, and after a *ſhorter* Inquiry than was generally made. And this in perfect Conſiſtence with the Notion we have been maintaining. For, if the Merit of Faith ariſes, in great Meaſure, from a due Care in extirpating Prejudices; the *more effectually* theſe were extirpated, the *greater* would this Merit be. And I fear not to aſſert that *thoſe* Perſons, who had moſt *effectually* weeded out their *Prejudices*, would moſt *readily* embrace *Chriſtianity*; would both be convinced upon *leſs* Evidence, and in a *ſhorter* Time, than other Men. For, without Queſtion, the *Difficulty* of our *Conviction*, all other Circumſtances being ſuppoſed equal, is always in Proportion to the *Strength* of our *Prejudices.* *Strong* Prejudices are not to be over-

overcome with leſs than *demonſtrative* Arguments; while thoſe of a *ſlighter* Sort will frequently give way to *moral* Proofs: and, could we ſuppoſe a Man entirely *free* from Prejudice; he would yield to *every* Kind of Reaſoning, at leaſt when rightly underſtood, *thoſe* Degrees of Force and Weight, which juſtly and properly *belong* to it.—So that a ready Aſſent to the Truth of our Saviour's Miſſion, *ſuppoſing* that Miſſion to be *well atteſted*, was an Argument of a *fair* and *candid* Mind; it was not, as is pretended, a Sign of *Credulity*; but a Sign of *Honeſty* and *good Senſe*: and, as ſuch, was *deſervedly* commended.

INDEED our Saviour never fails to expreſs his Approbation on receiving a *reaſonable* and *intelligent* Anſwer. And, what is very remarkable, in more Inſtances than one, he extols the *Faith* of the Perſons with whom he is converſing, as it ſhould ſeem, on no other Account, than becauſe they gave Signs of a *good Underſtanding* on the Subject of *Religion*. —How different this from thoſe Notions, which are induſtriouſly propagated in *Catholic Countries*; that all the Merit of Faith conſiſts in aſſenting, we know not *why*, to Doctrines we do not, and cannot *underſtand!* or, to ſpeak more properly, in *profeſſing* to believe, what, in Truth and *Fact*, can neither be *believed*, nor *disbelieved* by any Man living!— But ſuch a Faith, *where-ever* it is to be found,

comes not within the Bounds of this Inquiry; as being no *Portion of religious Knowlege*, or indeed of any Knowlege at all.

To return —— If thoſe Proſelytes, who are mentioned in the Goſpel, appear to us to have been too *haſty* in embracing a *new* Religion; we ſhould conſider the Strength of the *Evidence*, by which that Religion was ſupported. They who had ſeen, with their own Eyes, a *dead* Man raiſed to *Life*, might ſurely be excuſed from all *Heſitation*. Nay, the leaſt and loweſt of our Saviour's *Miracles*, when taken in Conjunction with his *Character* and *Doctrine*, could not fail of producing a very *ſpeedy* Effect in the Minds of ſober and reaſonable Men.—Nor would this render their Belief morally *worthleſs*. The Excellence of Faith is by no means to be eſtimated from the Length of *Time* taken up in the Inquiry; but chiefly depends on thoſe *good Diſpoſitions* of Mind, with which we begin to inquire. Indeed a diligent *Perſeverance* in ſearching for the Truth was, in *their* Circumſtances, neither poſſible, nor *needful*. But the Virtues of *Humility* and *Impartiality* might ſtill appear with the greateſt Luſtre. Nay, the *ſooner* Men aſſented to the Truth of our Saviour's Miſſion, the *clearer* Evidence they gave, that they were neither *prejudiced* in Favour of *received* Opinions, nor violently *attached* to their *own*. And ſurely ſecular *Intereſt* was *quite* excluded

excluded from their Thoughts: when they *left all that they had and followed* Chriſt: when they *believed Him* to be a true *Prophet*, whoſe Commands were ſo *diſagreeable* to corrupt *Nature*, ſo utterly *inconſiſtent* with temporal *Proſperity*. We can have ſmall Reaſon to doubt of *their Probity*, who were content to expoſe themſelves to the Frowns of their *Superiors*, the Contumely of the *Rabble*, and the Contempt of *all*; merely to obey the *Call* of *Truth*. I ſay nothing of the *Perſecutions* which followed, becauſe theſe, it may be ſaid were not then foreſeen.—But I cannot forbear repeating in this Place, that whatever *Exceptions* there might be to theſe *general* Obſervations; our Saviour's *Knowlege* of Men's inmoſt *Thoughts* perfectly well enabled him to find them out. We have therefore no Pretence for ſuppoſing, that he beſtowed his Praiſe on unworthy Objects.

AFTER all, where can be the Merit of *yielding* to *irreſiſtible* Evidence? Whether Men aſſented ſoon or late, yet an Aſſent *extorted* by *Miracles*, may ſeem to have been *unavoidable*, and therefore *undeſerving* of Praiſe.—But if the Efficacy of Miracles were ſo great as this Objection ſuppoſes, how came it to paſs that Thouſands of Spectators remained *unconverted?* And why was the Number of *true* Diſciples, during the Lifetime of our Saviour, comparatively ſpeaking

ſo very *ſmall?*—I only deſire an Anſwer to this ſingle Queſtion, why *ſome believed, and others believed not*; when the very *ſame* Evidence had been offered *to both?*—The Difference could reſult from nothing elſe, but Men's different *Capacities* or different *Diſpoſitions* of Mind. Not the former, becauſe *the wiſe and prudent*, the *leading* Men among the *Jews*, were the moſt *virulent* in their *Oppoſition*, and moſt *obſtinate* in their *Unbelief*. It was owing therefore to the *latter* of theſe Cauſes. Either then we muſt aſcribe it to a faulty *Credulity* on one Side, and a rational *Suſpence* on the other; or to *Humility* and *Candour* in the *former*, *Pride* and *Prejudice* in the *latter*. But he muſt be an utter Stranger to the Opinions and Temper of the *Jews*, who can imagine *any* Part of them diſpoſed to *Credulity*, in a Matter of this Nature. Nothing could lie more croſs to their *Apprehenſions* and their *Paſſions*; nothing could be more unlikely to meet with a favourable Reception, than the Religion of a *crucified Saviour* *. — Their Conviction then was owing to no other Cauſe, but a *fair* and *candid* Diſpoſition of Mind. By this they were enabled to ſurmount the greateſt Difficulties, and to remove the ſtrongeſt

* As for thoſe who followed him under the Notion of a *Temporal Prince*; and immediately *deſerted* him, when they found themſelves diſappointed: *they*, I preſume, are out of the Queſtion. For it does not appear that the Faith of *ſuch* Perſons is ever extolled in the ſacred Writings.

eſt Impediments. To this it was owing that *Children and Babes* (as our Saviour beautifully calls them) enjoyed a *clear Revelation* of thoſe Truths, which were *hid from the Eyes* of *the Rulers* themſelves. That *Hiding* might be partly *judicial*, as a juſt Reward of Hypocriſy and Villany. But doubtleſs it was chiefly occaſioned by a *wilful* Perverſion of their *own* Faculties—In ſhort, if Miracles are ſufficient for the *Conviction* of a *reaſonable* Man; but *not* ſufficient for the *Satisfaction* of an *unreaſonable* one: then it muſt be allowed that our Saviour's Miniſtry afforded Room for the Exerciſe of *thoſe* Virtues, on which I found the Excellence of *Faith*.

One Thing more I think it needful to obſerve, before I quit this Part of my Subject.—It may poſſibly be thought that the Virtue of *Faith*, as I have here explained and defended it, belongs only to *Philoſophers* and *Scholars*. But this, I preſume, is far from the Truth. The Quantity of *Knowlege* actually *gained* cannot indeed be conſiderable in the *Bulk* of Mankind. But the *good Diſpoſitions* of Mind, from whence it's *Moral Worth* is deduced, are of as great Extent as any other: nay, they are frequently the *moſt* conſpicuous in the *illiterate* Part of Mankind. *Humility* and *Learning* have long been conſidered as *Rivals*. And if we would ſearch for Inſtances of the higheſt and moſt unreaſonable *Partia-*

lity, we ſhall but too often find it intimately joined with the largeſt and moſt comprehenſive *Erudition*. It is further to be conſidered, that Men of Learning may be influenced by *wrong Motives*. Perhaps they only want the *Fame* of Learning: perhaps they have ſome *ſelfiſh* View to ſerve: perhaps they *fear* to diſcover the Truth; leſt the Diſcovery ſhould *incapacitate* them for what *they* eſteem more *valuable* than Truth. Such Men, however diſqualified for the Acquiſition of *true* Wiſdom; yet are not diſqualified for that which wears her *Maſque*, and by common Eyes is *miſtaken* for her. — For the *Attainment* of what is *vulgarly* called *Learning*, little more than *Diligence* can be reputed *neceſſary*. And when it *is* attained, it is often *inſtrumental* in producing the very *contrary* Qualities, to thoſe which I conſider as the *Sources* of *Knowlege*. The very *Pains* it coſts us, is enough to give us an immoderate Value for it; and the *Singularity* of the Accompliſhment raiſes that Value ſtill higher. Till in a little Time we begin to think our ſelves incapable of all further Information: and what we *think*, we *are*.—Is it better then to *avoid* ſo dangerous a Qualification, and to ſit down contented without it? By no means. I am not endeavouring to *depretiate* Learning. It is of great and excellent *Uſe* to a Mind *willing* to make a *right* Uſe of it. But the *beſt* Things in the World

World are liable to *Abuſe*; and, when this happens, they become the *worſt*.—If the Progreſs we make in Human Learning does not engage us to relinquiſh thoſe *better Qualities*, which have been already enumerated; nor take us off from the Purſuit of *more important Truths*: if, on the contrary, *all* other Studies are purſued in conſtant *Subordination* to that which is the *chief* of all, the Study of our *Maker* and our *ſelves*—the Improvement of our *Faith* cannot but keep Pace with the Improvement of our *Underſtandings*; nor will it fail of producing it's genuine Effect, in making us *wiſer* and *better* Men.

THE Sum of what has been ſaid amounts to this.—That, by a very natural Figure of Speech, the Excellence of the *Cauſe* is often transferred to the *Effect*: That no ſufficient Reaſon appears, why the *ſame* Way of ſpeaking may not be uſed on the Subject *before us*: That Religious Knowlege in *general* proceeds from the *nobleſt Cauſes*, whether we conſider the *Motive* on which it is purſued, or the *Means* by which it is obtained: That the Faith of a *Chriſtian* involves theſe Excellencies in a ſtill *greater* Degree: That a right Belief of *particular Doctrines* preſuppoſes, even in our *own* Times, a conſiderable Share of Virtue and Diſcretion: That in the *earlier* Ages a *general* Belief in *Chriſt* deſerved all the Praiſes which are beſtowed upon it in the New

Teſtament: And laſtly, that the *particular Inſtances*, which occur *there*, contain nothing *inconſiſtent* with the Account here given; but, on the contrary, *confirm* and *ſupport* it.

IT was farther affirmed that Chriſtian Faith was not only the *Effect*, but the *Ground* of Virtue; and on this Account alſo *morally excellent*. But the Proſecution of this Part of my Subject will fall in under the *next* Head.—Before I enter upon *that*, it may be proper to take Notice, that the Senſe in which I have hitherto underſtood *Faith*, and in which I have attempted to vindicate it's *Excellence*, is not the *only* Senſe which occurs in Scripture. There are *three* others in which the Signification of the Word is a little more *reſtrained* and *particular*. * For,

1*ſt*, BECAUSE a Belief of God's *Veracity* lies at the *Foundation* of *all* Faith whatever; therefore we ſometimes find *Faith* uſed for the Belief of this *ſingle* Article; and eſpecially of God's *Faithfulneſs* in performing *Promiſes*.

2*dly*, BECAUSE a *ſpeculative* or *habitual* Faith will not anſwer the *Ends* of Faith; it has therefore been brought to ſignify an *actual* Knowlege, frequently *preſent* to the Mind, of the moſt important Doctrines in Religion.

3*dly*, BECAUSE the Doctrine of a Future State

* All theſe Senſes of the Word ſuppoſe or imply the Aſſent of the *Underſtanding*. I have taken no Notice of any *other* Senſes, becauſe they are uſually attended with no Difficulty.

State is *more* important than *any other*; *Faith* therefore ſignifies, yet more particularly, a *practical* Belief of this *very* Doctrine. So that to *have Faith*, according to this Interpretation, is frequently to *recollect*, carefully to *conſider*, and earneſtly to *regard* the Joys that are ſet before us in another Life.

BESIDES theſe Inſtances, in which Faith is conſidered *ſubjectively*, it is alſo in ſome Places taken *objectively*; and denotes the *Truths* themſelves, either in whole or in part, which are revealed under the Goſpel Diſpenſation.

IN *which* of theſe Senſes the Word is to be underſtood, in any particular Paſſage, can only be determined from the *Context*.—But the 1*ſt* Kind of Faith here mentioned is plainly *included* in that *Religious Knowlege*, which has been ſo particularly conſidered: The 2*d* and 3*d* have a *peculiar* Merit of their own: and the *laſt* is entirely foreign to our Purpoſe.—I conclude therefore, upon the whole, that the MORAL EXCELLENCE of *Faith*, as repreſented to us in *Scripture*, is ſeen and confeſſed by *Right Reaſon*. I ought not to diſſemble that ſome of the beſt Judges have choſen to explain this Matter in a Way ſomewhat different from mine. Inſtead of *deriving* the *Excellence* of Faith from the good Diſpoſitions of Mind, by which it is produced, they have maintained that the *Word*, which we render *Faith*, may properly ſignify thoſe

Diſpo-

Diſpoſitions themſelves. To this they are led, not by obſerving a like Uſe of it in profane Writers; but from conſidering that this *figurative* Interpretation will, in many Places, be more *natural*, and more ſuitable to the *Context*.—Others again have extended the Signification of the Word, ſo as to take in *Obedience* to the *Laws* of the Goſpel; which appears to me to be no otherwiſe included in *Faith*, than as every *Effect* is *virtually* included in it's *Cauſe*. And *this* too is a Senſe only to be juſtified upon the ſame Grounds with the *preceding*.——Such a *Latitude* in interpreting Scripture is not, I think, to be admitted without *Neceſſity*. But if any of my Readers chuſe to *enlarge* the Signification of the *Word*, rather than *deny* the intrinſic Excellence of the *Thing*; I believe it will be found that there is no *real* Difference between *their* Notion and *mine*. They acknowlege, with me, that bare *Aſſent* is and muſt be a worthleſs Thing. They join with me in aſcribing the ſole Merit to thoſe virtuous *Actions*, which either *precede* Aſſent, or *follow after* it. And laſtly they agree that all the Praiſes contained in the ſacred Writings, were beſtowed on the very *ſame* Grounds.—Whether a figurative Senſe is to be aſcribed to the *Word* Faith, or whether the *Praiſes themſelves* are to be taken figuratively, is a Thing of no Conſequence at all.

SECT.

SECT. II.

WE are taught in Scripture, that the whole Race of Mankind will finally be divided into *two* Claſſes; the *one* to be doomed to *everlaſting Puniſhment*, the *other* to be made *Heirs* of *eternal Life*. The Words *Damnation* and *Salvation*, are commonly uſed to expreſs theſe two contrary States: for as *Condemnation* infers *Puniſhment*; ſo a *Releaſe* from Puniſhment, which is the proper Idea of *Salvation*, draws after it, by divine Appointment, a Participation of *endleſs Happineſs*. We are not allowed to ſuppoſe an *intermediate* State. Such a Suppoſition would offer the greateſt Violence, not only to *particular* Paſſages, but to the whole *Tenour* of the *Goſpel*.--By *Salvation* then, in *general*, is *only* to be underſtood *a State of future and perpetual Bliſs*; and whatever procures us *Admiſſion* to ſuch a State, is properly a *Means* of *Salvation*.

BUT the ſame *Scriptures* have alſo aſſured *us*, *Reaſon* itſelf bearing them Witneſs, that the Happineſs to be enjoyed in a Future State admits of great and endleſs *Variety*. The *Houſe* of God contains *many Manſions*, ſuited to the different *Capacities*, and the different *Merits* of their reſpective Inhabitants. On this

this Account *Salvation* is an *indeterminate* Thing; involving in itſelf *all* Degrees of Bliſs, from the *higheſt* to the *loweſt*, which are within the Reach of *any* Part of *Mankind:* and whatever procures us a *higher* Station in the World to come, whatever conduces to the *Improvement* of our Proſpects beyond the Grave, may juſtly be conſidered as a *Means of Salvation.*

THAT the *Faith* of a *Chriſtian* is in an *eminent* Degree *productive* of theſe valuable Effects, and, in ſome Senſe, *ſufficient* for their Production, it is my preſent Buſineſs to maintain and prove.

OUR *firſt* Inquiry then will be, Whether a Belief of the Doctrines of Chriſtianity conduces to the *Security* of our Future Happineſs? whether ſuch a Belief renders it more *probable*, that *ſome Place* will be allotted us in the Kingdom of God?—Before we can ſettle this Point, we muſt firſt be determined by what *Rule* Men's final State, either of Happineſs or Miſery, will be fixed and aſcertained at the laſt Day? Not that the Inquiry before us will require a *particular* Determination. It is ſufficient for our Purpoſe, if we can reſolve this ſingle Queſtion, Whether our *Condition* in the *other* World depends *ſolely* on our *Conduct* in *this?* whether any Thing elſe, beſides

ſides * *Moral Improvements* can give us a Claim to *Everlaſting Life?*—Now this Queſtion we may ſurely anſwer without the leaſt Heſitation. That we ſhall be judged by our *Works*, and our Works *only*, is the uniform Voice both of *Scripture* and *Reaſon*. I do not ſay that eternal Life is purely the *Reſult* of our own *Merit:* I only affirm that *good Works* are the *ſole Condition*, the *neceſſary Qualification*; *without* which that *Gift of God* cannot poſſibly be beſtowed, and *with* which it will not be refuſed.

IT would be deviating too far from my preſent Purpoſe to enter into a Detail of the *Proofs* on this Head. Eſpecially as the Truth of my Aſſertion is not likely to be called in Queſtion

* Some Readers may perhaps want to be reminded that *Chriſtian Morality* is a very different Thing from *Social Virtue*. It does indeed *include* that in a very *high* Degree: but it *alſo* extends to *all* our *Natural Obligations*, whether reſpecting the *Deity* or *ourſelves*. Not only ſo, but it comprehends a Variety of *new* Duties, diſcovered to us by the Light of *Revelation*. Whatever our *Reaſon*, as improved by *Chriſtianity*, recommends to our *Choice*, muſt certainly be eſteemed a Part of *Morality*. For, I preſume, this Word ſignifies a *right* Conduct of our Actions, not in *one* Reſpect, but in *all*.—When therefore I ſpeak of *Virtue*, *Moral Duty*, &c. I would always be underſtood to take in a *Deſire* and *Endeavour* to inform our ſelves rightly concerning the *Revealed* Will of God; a Compliance with the *Poſitive* Inſtitutions of the Goſpel; and, in ſhort, an unlimited *Obedience* to the *Laws of Chriſt*. Whoever allows, what, I think, no *Chriſtian* denies; that a *Legiſlative* Authority was committed to *our Saviour* by *God himſelf*, and yet *wilfully* diſobeys him in *any* Particular, is certainly guilty of an *immoral* Action. To ſay otherwiſe would be to make *Rebellion* againſt the *Governor* of the *World* no Breach of Morality.

Queſtion by thoſe Perſons with whom I mean to contend. Let me therefore, for the Sake of Brevity, be allowed to ſuppoſe, *without* Proof, That the Judge of the World is a *juſt* Judge. That one eſſential Part of Juſtice is a right *Diſtribution* of Happineſs and Miſery; and laſtly, That diſtributive Juſtice regards *ſolely* the *Moral Worth* of the Objects with which it is concerned.—Theſe are Principles drawn from *other Sciences*; Principles of *Morality* and *Natural Religion*: and, as ſuch, have a *Right* to be admitted, without further Evidence.

THIS Foundation being once laid, we ſhall have a firm and immoveable Support for the Notion we are endeavouring to eſtabliſh. For it ſeems, according to this Notion, that *Means* of *Salvation* and *Means* of *Virtue* are, in Effect, one and the ſame Thing; theſe two being *inſeparably connected*. The Queſtion then is reduced within narrower Bounds, and expoſed more diſtinctly to our View.—It is, in ſhort, only this, What Connection between *Faith* and *Morality*? between *Belief* and *Practice*? between embracing the *Religion*, and obeying the *Laws* of our Redeemer? *Whatever* Degree of Perfection in Virtue is made requiſite to our *Admiſſion* into Heaven, is that Degree more *likely* to be obtained by an *Infidel* or a *Chriſtian*? If the latter, it follows that the Knowlege of the Doctrines of Chriſtianity

Chriſtianity *muſt* be *conducive* to our *Salvation.*

BUT our Inquiry may be contracted one Degree further; by obſerving that all Moral Obligations are *relative* to the *Capacities* of the Agent. From whence it follows that Men's *Obligations* and *Knowlege* keep Pace with each other; and that the *former* cannot extend, in any Inſtance, beyond the *latter.* If therefore any Part of Mankind have been *unavoidably* deficient in the *Knowlege* of their Duty, a proportionable Deficience in the *Practice* of it would, in that Caſe, be without *Blame.* Such Perſons therefore cannot, in thoſe Inſtances, be fit Objects of *Puniſhment.* It is therefore impoſſible that their *utter Ruin* ſhould, in *any* Degree, depend on theſe *involuntary* Tranſgreſſions. I pretend not to ſet them on a *Level* with thoſe who have known *more,* and deſerved *better*; but I cannot think it credible that their *final* State of Happineſs or Miſery ſhould depend on the Performance of ſuch Conditions, which they could not poſſibly *know* to be *required* of them, and were under *no Obligation* to fulfil.

THE Queſtion before us is now reduced to this—Does our Belief of Chriſtianity render it more probable, that we ſhall be *ſincere* and *conſcientious* in the Diſcharge of our Duty? that we ſhall be *careful* to obey the Divine Will to the beſt of our *Knowlege,* and the beſt

beſt of our *Power?* If it does *this*, it plainly conduces to our Everlaſting Happineſs.—Now this, I preſume, will not be denied by him who conſiders theſe two Things. *Firſt*, That Chriſtianity ſtrengthens the *Motives*; and *Secondly*, That it ſupplies the *Means* to *ſuch* an *Obedience*, as I am here conſidering. I ſhall be very brief upon both theſe Particulars, becauſe they have been fully handled by others.

1. The great *Motive* to an uniform Courſe of Virtue, is the Greatneſs and Certainty of it's Future *Rewards:* and every Degree of freſh *Information* adds freſh *Weight* to that Motive. Now whatever adds Weight to the *Motives* of Religion, increaſes our *Deſire* of becoming religious; and whatever increaſes this Deſire, increaſes the *Probability* of our acting *religiouſly*.—Will it then be ſaid, that the Chriſtian Religion has yielded us *no* Information on this Subject? It cannot be thought; it will not be pretended. For *Natural Reaſon*, when improved to it's utmoſt Perfection, can afford us very little Certainty, either as to the *Nature*, or *Duration* of the Happineſs to be enjoyed after Death. That this Life is the *only* State of Probation; That the Life to come will be free from *Pain* and free from *Fear*; That the Bleſſings it contains are immenſely *great*, exceeding every Thing we can *conceive* or *imagine*; That all paſt Offences will be *utterly* forgot, and *entirely* forgiven; That we

we ſhall enjoy the Society of Beings *perfectly* virtuous, and be favoured with a more intimate *Knowlege* of the *Deity* himſelf; and laſtly, That this happy State will continue *for ever*, and *improve* for ever—Theſe are Doctrines purely *Scriptural*; and yet tending, in the higheſt Degree, to allure and invite us to the Diſcharge of our Duty.—We might eaſily extend theſe Obſervations to the *contrary* Motive; that, I mean, which ariſes from the *Fear* of *Puniſhment*. But, if what has been ſaid be not ſufficient, nothing of *this Sort can* be ſufficient. I ſhall therefore conclude, without further Heſitation, that the Man who is *animated* by the Motives of *Chriſtianity*, is in a *fairer* Way to obtain *Salvation*, than he who is left to the *Direction* of his own *Reaſon*.

2. ALL the *Danger* of tranſgreſſing our Duty ariſes either from *Inattention* to the Dictates of *Reaſon*, or from the prevailing Influence of our *Appetites* and *Paſſions*; and whatever provides a *Remedy* for theſe Evils, will proportionably *diminiſh* that Danger. If therefore the *Faith* of a *Chriſtian* be the *Means* of procuring ſuch a Remedy, it is alſo a Means of preſerving us from *Sin*.—Now we *think* we have ſufficient Ground from Scripture, to ſuppoſe that the Influence of the *Divine Spirit* is either *confined* to *Believers*, or communicated to them in a *peculiar* and ſig-

nal Manner. We are further perſuaded that this *Spirit* frequently *ſuggeſts* to our Minds thoſe very *Motives* which we are apt to overlook: and at the ſame Time *abates* the Force of the contrary *Temptations*; by moderating the Violence of our corrupt *Affections*, and bringing them into Subjection to the Law of *Reaſon*. If we are miſtaken in aſcribing *theſe* Effects to the Spirit; yet, in general, we are very ſure that he aids and encourages us in the Performance of our Duty, and renders it leſs difficult to be performed.—If Faith then, by Divine Appointment, draws along with it *theſe* Advantages, it may certainly be conſidered as a *Means* of *Salvation*.

But the Belief of Chriſtianity not only conduces to the *Security* of our Future Happineſs, but alſo to the *Increaſe* and *Improvement* of it.——Not only *Happineſs*, but the *Degree* of Happineſs depends ſolely on *Moral Qualifications*. As might eaſily be ſhewn, both from the Nature of the Thing, and likewiſe from the expreſs Declarations of Scripture. Whatever Reaſons determine the Deity to make a *good* Man *happy*, the ſame Reaſons will undoubtedly determine him to make a *better* Man *more happy*.—Suppoſing then, for the preſent, an Infidel and a Believer *equally* upright and *ſincere*; I aſk, which will be the *better* Man? Certainly He, whoſe religious Knowlege is moſt *extenſive*. For in Proportion

tion to the *Extent* of his Knowlege will be the *Number* of his Obligations: and therefore, ſuppoſing him *honeſt*, the Number of his *Virtues* will be in the *ſame* Proportion. If then our religious Knowlege be greatly *extended* by the *Chriſtian Revelation*, it follows that the Chriſtian Revelation is a *Means* of *Moral Improvement*.—I do not ſay that an Infidel deſerves *Blame*, for not diſcharging *imperceptible* Obligations; which are indeed, ſtrictly ſpeaking, *no* Obligations *at all*. But I maintain that a right Uſe and Improvement of *ten Talents* deſerves more *Praiſe*, and more *Favour* too, than a proportionable Improvement of only *five*. And he who ſhall aſſert the contrary, muſt maintain that the Virtue of the moſt *ignorant* Soul upon *Earth* is, or may be, equal to that of an *Archangel*.

How far the Doctrines of Chriſtianity exceed the *utmoſt Efforts* of Human Reaſon, I ſhall not ſtay to inquire. It is enough for my Purpoſe that *ſome* of thoſe Doctrines lay us under *new* Obligations; that *others* ſtrengthen the *old*; and all of them uniformly tend to *make the Good more Good*. I am the more willing to ſtop here, both becauſe theſe Matters have been ſufficiently explained by others, and alſo becauſe I am under no Neceſſity of reſting the whole Streſs of my Cauſe on this *ſingle* Point.—I have hitherto only compared Chriſtianity with ſuch an *imaginary* Improve-

ment of Natural Reaſon, as *in Fact* never ſubſiſted. And yet, even on this Suppoſition, I fear not to pronounce it a *Means* of *Virtue*, and, by Conſequence, a *Means* of *Salvation*. But to judge rightly of the mighty Efficacy of our Religion in bringing us *to God*, we ſhould conſider the *actual* State, both of the *Jewiſh* and *Gentile* World, before the Coming of *Chriſt*; and ſet *that* in Oppoſition to the *new* Scene of Things, which was introduced by the *Goſpel*.

And ſurely it will readily be granted, that, amidſt the numberleſs Errors and Corruptions, both in Religion and Morality, which then prevailed over the whole Earth, great was the *Danger* of Men's neglecting their Duty.—The *Jews* themſelves had fallen into groſs Miſtakes: and Miſtakes too which might eaſily prove *fatal*. For even *Miſtakes may* be fatal. Such I am ſure are all thoſe, which lead us to expect the Favour of God, on any other Terms than *inward Righteouſneſs*. When a Man is once brought to believe that Virtue is *unneceſſary*; he will be ſtrongly tempted to *deſert* it on every Occaſion. His *Reaſon* indeed will ſtill *approve* it; for otherwiſe he might deſert it without *Blame*. But he will knowingly and frequently *contradict* his *Reaſon*, when it is no longer connected with his *Intereſt*.—Now we find it to have been a prevailing Opinion among the Jewiſh Nation,

That

That a Man is juſtified by *the Works of the Law:* That *outward* and *legal* may ſupply the Place of *inward* Purity; and, That, in Conſideration of an exact and punctual Performance of an infinite Variety of *Rites* and *Ceremonies, the weightier Matters* might be ſafely omitted. This unhappy and unaccountable Prejudice had not only *tainted* the Manners of the People; had not only deformed the *outward Face* of Religion; but diffuſed it's Poyſon to the very *Vitals. The whole Head* was *ſick, and the whole Heart faint:* and, indeed, the extreme Difficulty of the *Cure* was a ſtrong Proof that the Malady had taken *faſt* Hold, and ſunk *deep* into the Conſtitution.—This Cure, great as it was, was the genuine Effect of *Chriſtian Faith*; which taught them the Vanity of ſeeking after God in any other Way, or by any other Means, than *Repentance from dead Works, and a new Life unto Holineſs.* A Doctrine of ſuch ſignal Importance, and ſuch powerful Influence; that had our Religion taught this, and this *only*, it might yet have deſerved, with the utmoſt Propriety, the glorious Title given it by the Apoſtle; who calls it *the Power of God to Salvation unto every one that believeth.*

I WOULD not ſwell this Inquiry to an unneceſſary Length, and therefore have ſelected *one* Inſtance out of *many*, in order to ſhew that the Salvation of the *Jews* was rendered

far more *ſecure* by their embracing the Doctrines of *Chriſtianity*.—Should I expatiate upon the Follies of the *Gentile* World, and point out the Dangers *they* were expoſed to, with regard to their Everlaſting Happineſs, the Subject would be almoſt infinite; at leaſt, as copious as the Errors and Abſurdities of Human Kind. Some, we know, pretended to doubt of the *natural* Difference between *Good* and *Evil*; others diſowned the *moral* Difference between *Virtue* and *Vice*: and no inconſiderable Sect, ſprung too from the immortal *Socrates*, openly referred all their Actions to the Attainment of *Bodily Pleaſures*. Some denied a *God*, others a *Providence*, others a *Future State* of Rewards and Puniſhments. Many Perſons who acknowleged the *Truth* of theſe Things, yet *explained* them in ſuch a *Manner*, as to render them of no Uſe or Efficacy in the Conduct of their *Lives*: and many more * *divided* Morality from Religion; leaving the *former* deſtitute of *Support*, and the *latter* empty of all real *Benefit*, either to the Owner or to Mankind in general. Were I diſpoſed to crowd my Page with *Quotations*, I could not wiſh for a more favourable Opportunity.

* I am far from intending in this, or any other Place, to repreſent Morality and Religion as the *ſame Thing*. I only plead for an *Union*, not a *Coincidence*. *Authority* and *Reaſon* are ſurely diſtinct Principles: and therefore a *Regard* to the *former* ſhould by no means be confounded with a *Regard* to the *latter*.

portunity. Since I ſhould have little to do, but to tranſcribe the firſt Places that occurred either in the *Writings* of the Antient Philoſophers, or the *Accounts* of thoſe, whoſe Writings have long ſince periſhed. Whether we conſult the one, or the other, we ſhall find that *Errors* of the moſt enormous Size ſhoot up in every Page.—Even the *Divine Plato*, who was read with *Rapture* for many Ages; and whoſe *ſingle* Judgment appeared to *Cicero* to outweigh the *united* Verdict of all the Reſt; this *God*, as he was *then* entitled, is found at laſt to have been a mere *Viſionary*: a Man who concealed his Abſurdities under a falſe *Elevation* of Thought; and varniſhed over the *Weakneſs* of his Arguments, with all the Colours which a lively Imagination, and a beautiful Language were capable of affording. —*Cicero* himſelf, who had taken ſo much Pains in examining and *explaining* the various Syſtems of Philoſophy then in the World; yet ſeems to have been ſtrangely in the Dark, on ſome of the *cleareſt* and moſt *important* Subjects. Though I mean not to deſcend to Particulars, yet I cannot forbear obſerving that the unnatural *Separation*, I juſt took Notice of between *Religion* and *Morality* appears no where more plainly, than in the moſt celebrated Writings of the *Roman Orator*. That great Man, the greateſt perhaps that ever lived without the Light of Revela-

tion, ſeems not to have *known*, or not to have *regarded* ſo plain a Principle as this, That *the Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wiſdom.*—The Errors I have already hinted at were *Philoſophical* Errors. Was the Condition of the *Populace* much *better?* In *ſome* Reſpects perhaps it was: but in *many* others yet *worſe.* A Multitude of Gods, weak, vicious, changeful Beings, was the great Article of the Popular Creed. And this Article *alone* muſt do inxpreſſible *Harm.* But when to this are added the great *Uncertainty* and *Confuſion* they were in, even on thoſe Points where they had a Glimmering of Truth; the great *Reliance* they had, in common with the Jews, on outward Rites and ſuperſtitious Practiſes; and all the other Abſurdities of their traditional Theology: I preſume, it is evident beyond Contradiction, that they were very imperfectly *ſecured* againſt diſobeying the Law of their *Reaſon.*—*That* Religion therefore, which *ſaved* the *Gentiles* from the Influence of ſuch pernicious and dangerous Errors, was to them a *Means* of *Salvation.* It made them virtuous, and *therefore* happy.

But let us now ſuppoſe an Unbeliever, whether a *Jew* or a *Heathen*, truly *conſcientious* in the Diſcharge of his Duty——yet how greatly would he fall ſhort of *Chriſtian Perfection!* We have before conſidered how this Matter ſtood, ſuppoſing Reaſon improved

to

to it's *utmoſt* Pitch. We are now conſidering the different Degrees of Virtue, which may be ſuppoſed to have *actually* exiſted, before and ſince the Coming of *Chriſt*. And here ſurely is no Room for Compariſon.—I will but touch very ſlightly, firſt on *Jewiſh*, and then on *Gentile* Righteouſneſs.—Whatever the *Jews might* have known, their Notions, in *Fact*, ſeem to have been miſerably deficient. They neither underſtood their *Maker*, nor their *Fellow* Creatures; neither the *ſpiritual Worſhip*, which was acceptable to the *former*, nor the *Univerſal Benevolence*, which was due to the *latter*—Amidſt this *general* Depravation both of *religious* and *moral* Sentiments, we can hardly ſuppoſe that *particular Perſons*, however honeſt and well-diſpoſed, would be able to procure a right Information. The Thing at leaſt muſt be extremely difficult, conſidering the Force of Prejudice and the Contagion of Example. And ſo long as they *continued* in this *Ignorance*; it was little leſs than *impoſſible*, to make any conſiderable *Proficience* in Virtue.—But now ſo great is the Alteration introduced by the Goſpel, that, upon theſe *capital* Points, it is ſcarce poſſible for a Chriſtian to judge amiſs. Not, I mean, without a wilful *Inadvertence*, or a criminal *Partiality*. From whence it follows that a *Jew*, by embracing Chriſtianity, put himſelf into a *Capacity* of arriving at *greater* Perfection in *Goodneſs*;

neſs; and, by conſequence, of obtaining a *larger* Share of *Bliſs* and *Glory* in a Future State.

If ſuch was the Condition of the *choſen* People of God, what ſhall we think of thoſe, who were *Strangers to the Covenant?* Amidſt all the Errors and Corruptions of the *Jews*, at the Time of our Saviour's Appearance, *Idolatry* however could find no Place. The Belief and Worſhip of the *one* God had been carefully and religiouſly preſerved among them, ever ſince their Return from the *Babylonian* Captivity. Whereas the Heathens not only erred in the *Kind* but in the *Object* of their Devotions; and this too almoſt without *Exception.* The *wiſeſt* as well as the *weakeſt* concurred with one Conſent in the *Worſhip* of a Multitude of *imaginary* Deities, and the *Neglect* of the *True God.*—Whatever then may be ſaid of the *Perfection* of *Natural Religion*, if it be true *at all*, it is true only in *Theory.* If we form our Judgment from *Fact* and *Experience*, we ſhall find that ſimple, unaſſiſted *Nature* had either left Men without any Religion at all, or engaged them, at beſt, in a *falſe* Religion. I do not at preſent recollect one Inſtance of a Perſon not utterly *irreligious*, who refuſed to join in the Idolatry of his Country. If they did this *againſt* their Conſcience; they wanted the *Motives* of *Chriſtianity*, to draw them back to their Duty:

Duty: but if, as we are ſuppoſing, Men were Idolaters upon *Principle*; they then wanted the *Doctrines* of *Chriſtianity*, to remove their Errors, and ſet them into a right Way. In either Caſe they were *ſaved by Faith*; becauſe, through *Faith* in *Chriſt*, they were recovered from the groſſeſt *Superſtition* and *Folly*, to the *Love* and *Fear* of Almighty God.

To purſue theſe Reflections through every Part of Moral Duty would perhaps be going too far. I ſhall content myſelf with obſerving that the *Heathens* in general ſeem to have had no Notion of that *unlimited Benevolence*, and that *unſpotted Purity*, which are the Marks and Badges of the Chriſtian Profeſſion.—Leaving this Obſervation to ſupport itſelf, I ſhall now venture to conclude, from what has been ſaid, that a *Good Chriſtian* is many Degrees ſuperior to a *Good Heathen*; and therefore that *Faith in Chriſt* contributes in an eminent Degree to the *Improvement* of our Future Happineſs.

It may be of Uſe to reflect a little on what has been ſaid, that the entire Force of the Argument may be taken in at one View.—I undertook to prove that the *Faith* of a *Chriſtian* conduces both to the *Security*, and the *Improvement* of our Happineſs in a Life to come. For this Purpoſe it was neceſſary to ſhew, Firſt, that a Chriſtian is of all Men the moſt *likely* to be *ſincere* in the Diſcharge of his Duty:

Duty: Secondly, that *ſuppoſing* him ſincere, he will arrive at the greateſt *Degree* of *Perfection* in *Virtue*. The former *ſecures*; the latter *improves* his Reward. —— Each of theſe Points I have conſidered in two different Lights: for *firſt* I have ſhewn the Advantage of *Faith*, preferably to the *higheſt* Attainments of natural Reaſon; and ſecondly in Compariſon of the *actual* State of the World before the Coming of *Chriſt*. In the *former* Senſe *Faith* is a Means of Salvation to *us*, and to *all Chriſtians*. The *latter* more *peculiarly* belongs to thoſe Perſons who were converted to Chriſtianity in the firſt Ages of the Goſpel. And it is moſt frequently in this *latter* Senſe, that Men's Salvation is in *Scripture* aſcribed to *Faith*. But theſe, as well as many other Declarations in the New Teſtament, tho' more *emphatically* true of the firſt Chriſtians, are yet in *ſome Senſe* to be extended to *all* the Followers of *Chriſt* in all Ages.

It is no ſmall Confirmation of the Reaſoning I have uſed, that *Experience* and *Hiſtory* ſeem to be on the ſame Side. The great Change of Manners, which was *uſually* effected by Men's Converſion to Chriſtianity, is a ſtrong Proof of the Extent of it's Influence. And for the *Reality* of ſuch a Change, we have the concurrent Teſtimony of *Friends* and

and *Enemies.* * The very Perſecutors themſelves, at leaſt in the earlieſt Ages, could not forbear *acknowleging* their *Virtue*, while they *condemned* their *Religion.*—But our own Writers repreſent a *Saint* and a *Chriſtian* as, generally ſpeaking, the *ſame Thing:* and, notwithſtanding a few groundleſs Calumnies, they boldly aſſert their Freedom from the prevailing Vices of the Age, and challenge their Adverſaries to find a *Man* among them, who was guilty of any *one* notorious Crime. The Paſſages to this Purpoſe in *Juſtin* and *Tertullian* are too well known to be cited.—In the New Teſtament itſelf, *Faith* and *Repentance* are always conſidered as Things inſeparably connected, and *mutually* productive of each other. In ſhort a Proſelyte to the *Goſpel* was a Proſelyte to *Virtue*, and *therefore* intitled to the *Reward* of Virtue.

AFTER what has been ſaid, I ſhall add but a very few Words with regard to the *Sufficiency* of Chriſtian Faith. If it only produce thoſe *good Effects*, which it is naturally *fitted* to produce, it will certainly be *able* to *ſave* our Souls. But if theſe Effects are prevented by our *Careleſſneſs* or *Obſtinacy*; we cannot be ſaid to fail of Salvation through the *Inſufficiency*

* It would be Loſs of Time to inſert Paſſages that have been ſo often quoted. Let me juſt obſerve that *Pliny* and *Lucian* (de Mort. Peregr.) are unexceptionable Witneſſes; the former being a Perſecutor, the latter a *Derider* of Chriſtianity.

ficiency of *Faith*, but through our own Folly and *Miſconduct* in neglecting to make a right *Uſe* of ſo excellent and *effectual* a Means.—Be that as it may, *Faith* without *Works* is expreſſly declared to be inſignificant: and therefore cannot be eſteemed *ſufficient* in any other Senſe, than as it naturally and generally tends to our Growth and Improvement in true Goodneſs.—But as it is probable that among the firſt Converts to the Goſpel, it *ſeldom* failed of producing this Effect; it is the leſs to be wondered that St. *Paul* conſiders it as *including* in itſelf all the Virtues of Chriſtianity, and giving a *Title* to the Rewards of the Goſpel.

I AM ſenſible the Generality of Chriſtians have ſuppoſed a Connection between *Faith* and *Salvation* of a very different Kind from what has been here explained. To which they have been led by the ſeeming *Oppoſition*, which every where appears in St. *Paul*'s Writings between *Faith* and *Good Works*. The Apoſtle diſcovers on all Occaſions a particular Zeal on this Head. He does not ſay that Faith ſaves us by *making* us *righteous*, which is the Doctrine here maintained: but that our *Faith* ſhall be *imputed* to us *for Righteouſneſs*. He ſeems, in very many Places, to aſcribe our Salvation *wholly* to the *former*: in others he evidently conſiders it as a Sort of *Equivalent* for our Defects in the *latter*.—This is a real and

and great Difficulty. But I apprehend nothing can be inferred from it, except this, that St. *Paul* is not yet perfectly *underſtood.* Whatever be his Meaning, of this we are very ſure, that he *could* not mean what has been often *imagined.* He could not mean that the Governor of the World would deal *unjuſtly* with his Creatures; or that Juſtice would allow him to *diſtribute* Happineſs, without Regard to the *Merit* of the Recipients; or laſtly, that *Faith* only was meritorious, and *Good Works* of no Value at all. This, I ſay, he *could* not mean: becauſe it is contrary to *Right Reaſon*; becauſe it is contrary to the Declarations of St. *James*; becauſe it is contrary to his *own* Declarations. On *Suppoſition* therefore that the Difficulty alleged were really *unanſwerable*, it proves nothing but our own *Ignorance*; nothing but, what every one allows, the Difficulty of interpreting St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles.

But after all, perhaps *theſe* Paſſages are *leſs* obſcure than has been *ſuppoſed*—It has been juſtly obſerved by thoſe Writers who attempt to *reconcile* the two Apoſtles, that in numberleſs Places the *Works* ſpoken of by St. *Paul* were nothing elſe but the Performance of the *Ceremonial Law:* whereas *Faith* draws after it, by *natural* Conſequence, a Train of Moral and Chriſtian Virtues. In *this* Senſe therefore it is in no Degree ſurprizing, that Salvation is

is aſcribed to *Faith* rather than *Works*. Nay it is perfectly agreeable to the Scheme here laid down. And this Conſideration alone will greatly *diminiſh* the *Number* of thoſe Paſſages which may be alleged againſt us. — But ſtill, it muſt be owned, there *are* Paſſages, in which *Moral Virtues* ſeem to be excluded from *any Share* in effecting our Salvation; and the *whole* of it aſcribed to *Faith only*. Concerning this Point I would affirm nothing raſhly; not, I mean, as to the *Senſe* of the Apoſtle. But the following Account I judge moſt agreeable to *Reaſon*, and to *other Parts* of the *Sacred Writings*. And it ſeems to me that the Paſſages in Queſtion will fairly and naturally *allow* us to interpret them in Conformity thereto.

THOUGH the Happineſs prepared for us in a Future State will be exactly *proportioned* to our *Good Deſerts*, as Reaſon and Equity require; yet theſe Deſerts, conſidered in themſelves, give us no *Claim* or *Title* to Happineſs. The Bleſſings we enjoy, even in *this* Life, are ſtrictly and properly the *Gift of God*; and indeed, ſetting aſide the *Performance* of *Promiſes*, *Expletory* Juſtice can have no Place at all in his *Benefits* to his Creatures. Were any Man ſuffered to paſs *all* his Days upon Earth, without *once* taſting of Grief or Pain; to ſuch a Perſon, however *innocent*, however *dutiful* to his Maker, it could ſurely be eſteemed no *Injury*,

Injury, ſhould God deprive him of his Life and his *Being* together. How ſuch a Proceeding might conſiſt with *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* is indeed another Queſtion; but in regard to *Juſtice* the Caſe is quite clear.—And if Creatures of a *mixed* and *irregular Character* have a ſuitable Mixture of *Bliſs* and *Woe*, the Caſe is ſtill the ſame; here is evidently no Room for Complaint or Murmuring: I mean, when we conſider *Individual* Perſons, without reflecting on their *Comparative* Goodneſs. If indeed we do this, *diſtributive* Juſtice will require a more *regular* State of Things, where every Man may be *happy* or *miſerable* in *proportion* as he has been *virtuous* or *vicious*.—But there is no Occaſion for ſuch a State to be *much* ſuperior to *this*, either in *Degree* or *Duration*. Nothing further is requiſite, but that Goods and Evils may be more equably *diſpoſed*: that, when all Accounts come to be fairly ballanced, no Man may appear to have been a *Gainer* by his *Vice*, or a *Loſer* by his *Virtue*; but, on the contrary, the *beſt* Men to have been the *moſt favoured* by the Governor of the World.—So far will *Juſtice* require; and no *farther*. Whatever Proſpect we have beyond this, *it is the Gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt*. It is entirely owing to God's free Bounty, that our Future Happineſs will be immenſely *great*, and infinitely *durable*. It is more *eſpecially* owing to his Mercy,

through Chriſt, that our weak and imperfect Obedience, frequently interrupted by wilful *Tranſgreſſions*, and ſeldom free from lamentable *Infirmities*, ſhall yet be accepted in the ſame Manner, as if it was *intire* and *perfect*; all Offences being *cancelled*, upon our ſincere *Repentance*, and all Penalties beyond the Grave being effectually, and for ever *removed*.——This being the Caſe; the Apoſtle might ſurely affirm, that we are not *juſtified* by our own *Righteouſneſs*. He might affirm this, becauſe he was ready to ſupport it with this inconteſtable Proof; that *we have all ſinned, and come ſhort of the Glory of God*. Had our Righteouſneſs been free from all *Defects*; it might have been thought ſufficient for our *Juſtification*: I mean, our *Exemption* from future Sufferings. But as we are all *guilty before God*, our Title to Salvation *muſt* be derived from a quite different Source. And this Source is evidently no other, than the all-ſufficient *Merits* of our *Redeemer*; *through whom we have received Remiſſion of Sins*, and are *made Heirs of Everlaſting Life*.

But if *Good Works* be not the *Cauſe* of our Salvation, yet are they not the proper, the neceſſary *Qualification*?—If they are, *no Man* can be *ſaved*. For no Man can pretend to be *ſo qualified*: becauſe, as I have already obſerved, no Man can plead *Univerſal Righteouſneſs*. And *this* it is, which St. *Paul* means by

by *Works*, whenever he uſes that Word in a *moral* Senſe *.—Still it remains to be anſwered, how our *Faith* can be *imputed* to us for *Righteouſneſs?* But I hope the Anſwer cannot now be difficult. *Faith* in *Chriſt* is naturally productive of *Evangelical Obedience*. It induces us to *accept* the gracious Offers of the Goſpel, and to *comply* with the Terms propoſed in it; and, by *this* Means, enables us to *obtain* the *Promiſed Rewards*.—St. *Paul* then is never to be underſtood, as oppoſing *Faith* to *Goſpel Righteouſneſs*: ſince *that* can no way intitle us to Chriſt's *Heavenly Kingdom*, but by making us *good Subjects* to him upon *Earth*. But *Faith* is oppoſed to *univerſal* and *perfect Righteouſneſs*, and declared *ſufficient* to ſupply the *Want* of it. In ſhort, ſuch a Belief of the *Doctrines*, as makes us obedient to the *Laws* of the *Goſpel*, ſhall attone for all our Offences againſt the more *rigorous* Law of *Right Reaſon*.—St. *James*, on the other hand, means by *Good Works*, a ſincere Obedience to the *Evangelical Law*; and he therefore affirms, with great Reaſon, that *Faith without Works is dead*.

It may be proper to take Notice, while I am upon this Subject, that, however the *Moral Excellence* of Faith depends on the *Manner*

* So in *other* Places he underſtands by *Works*, *Univerſal Obedience* to the *Jewiſh* Law; ſuch an Obedience as is not conſiſtent with any the *minuteſt* Deviation; much leſs with *enormous* Sins, tho' afterwards repented of and forſaken.

ner in which it is acquired, yet the *Good Effects* of it *do not*. A Belief of the Doctrines of Chriſtianity, tho' perhaps *merely* the Effect of Education, and *altogether* unſupported by rational Arguments, may yet be of great and excellent *Uſe* in *enlightening* Men's *Minds* and *reforming* their *Manners*.—*Capacity* and *Opportunity* for a diligent Examination may make it our *Duty* to *try* the Principles of our Religion, and to *ſearch* them to the very Bottom. But I am forced to agree with a *late Writer*, however I may differ from him in other Things, that ſuch an Inquiry is not *ordinarily* to be *expected*. The Bulk of Mankind have in all Ages taken their Religion upon *Truſt*. This may have been *partly* their own *Fault*; but, in *ſome Degree*, it cannot well be otherwiſe.—Should any one try the Experiment with a rude, honeſt, illiterate *Chriſtian*, and lay before him, in as plain a Manner as poſſible, the Evidences *for* and *againſt* his Religion; he might indeed *perplex*, but he would find it very difficult to *inform* him. Such a Procedure could have no other Effect with Men unus'd to Thought and Reflection, but only to *unſettle* all their *Principles*, and to tear up their *Prejudices* and their *Virtue* together.——If it be thought ſafer for ſuch Perſons only to ſtudy the Evidence on the *Side* of Revelation, this can by no means amount to a *rational* Search; ſince,

right

right or wrong, they are *ſure* to be *convinced*.—After all it *muſt* be confeſſed that the State and Circumſtances of the lower Part of the World do not uſually *qualify* them for Reſearches of this Nature. The *Authority* of Wiſe and Good Men is often the *beſt* Argument they are *capable* of diſcerning: and yet *this* Argugument would hold, with *equal* Strength, for *any* Eſtabliſhed Religion, that ever exiſted.—But notwithſtanding the Generality of Chriſtians believe on weak and inſufficient Grounds; notwithſtanding many of them have acquired their Faith without any Merit of their own: yet ſo long as their *Belief* has the *ſame* Influence on their *Practice*, the *Efficacy* of that *Practice* can thereby ſuffer no Diminution. Though their *Faith* be leſs meritorious, yet the *Virtue* ſpringing from it will, on that Account, be neither leſs *valuable*, nor leſs *rewarded*.

I HAVE only to add that *Faith*, in a more *reſtrained* Senſe, is ſometimes conſidered as the *Means of Salvation*.—That this Word frequently ſignifies an *actual* Reflection upon God's *Promiſes*, and a *firm* Belief that he will certainly *perform* them, is what I have already obſerved in the preceding Section. — In this Senſe the Propoſition I am now maintaining is more *peculiarly* true; both becauſe our Opinion of God's *Veracity* eminently conduces to our moral Improvement; and becauſe *no*

Opinions can influence our *Actions*, unleſs they are *frequently* preſent to our Minds.—Upon the whole, I preſume it ſufficiently appears, that *Faith* is the beſt Means to make us *holy*, and by conſequence, to make us *happy*: that, though it will not work in us *Univerſal Righteouſneſs*; it is ſufficient to engage our Complyance with the *gentler* Terms of the *Goſpel*, and *therefore* ſufficient to procure *Salvation*.

SECT. III.

NECESSITY is a *relative* Word; implying an inſeparable *Connection* either natural or factitious, between the *Terms* ſo related. To affirm therefore that Faith is neceſſary, is a Manner of ſpeaking not ſufficiently determinate. Before it can be known what *Truth* there is in ſuch an Affirmation, the particular *Ends* muſt firſt be ſpecified, to which this Neceſſity is ſuppoſed to belong.—Now we may ſay, in general, that Faith is neceſſary for our *Admiſſion* into *Chriſt's Kingdom*; either his Kingdom upon *Earth*, or his *heavenly* Kingdom. In other Words thus; Without Faith in Chriſt we can neither *enter* into *Covenant* with him, nor enjoy the *Benefits*

fits of that Covenant: we cannot obtain the *peculiar Privileges* of his Church and People, either in *this* Life, or the Life *to come*. Theſe being evidently *diſtinct Ends*, will require a diſtinct and ſeparate Conſideration.

THE Privileges peculiar to the Members of the Chriſtian Church, during their *Continuance* here on *Earth*, are either *external* or *internal*. A Man is ſaid to be admitted to the *outward* Privileges of the Church, when he is ſuffered to partake in her *public Worſhip*, and to join with her in a *public Obſervance* of the *poſitive* Inſtitutions of *Jeſus Chriſt*. The *inward* Advantages belonging to Chriſtians are thoſe powerful Aſſiſtances of the Holy Spirit, which our Lord himſelf has graciouſly promiſed to his own peculiar *Flock* and *People*. Both the one and the other are *Means of Grace*, that is Means of Improvement in *Chriſtian Virtue*, and indeed receive their *whole* Value from this ſingle Conſideration.—By what *Rules*, and in what *Meaſures* the Spirit of God is communicated to *Believers*, and how large a *Share* of Faith is requiſite to *entitle* us to it; are Points neither eaſy, nor *needful* to be determined. If we apply to the *Scriptures*, we ſhall only meet with *general* Declarations; if we apply to *Reaſon*, we ſhall ſoon be convinced, that theſe Things are entirely out of her *Province* —I ſhall only, therefore, conſider the *Faith* of a *Chriſtian*, as it is

relative to the *outward* Privileges of *Church-Communion:* or, ſtill more particularly, as it is *previouſly requiſite* in thoſe Perſons who come to be *baptized*; ſince the Rite of Baptiſm is *introductory* to the reſt, and is the *outward Sign*, appointed by Chriſt himſelf, both of our *Entrance* into his Church, and our *Participation* of all it's Benefits. — To avoid needleſs Perplexity, I meddle not with the Diſpute about *Infant*-Baptiſm. I would only enquire into the neceſſary Qualifications, in Perſons of *maturer* Age, for *Admiſſion* to the *Goſpel-Covenant.*

I HAVE hitherto ſpoken of Faith *indeterminately*; the Nature of my Subject not demanding any Thing fixed and particular. As Faith in general is *morally excellent*, and highly *conducive* to our *Everlaſting Welfare*; ſo different *Degrees* of Faith will be *proportionably* excellent, and *proportionably* conducive to the ſame End. When all other Things are ſuppoſed equal, greater *Faith* will always be an Argument of greater *Virtue:* and, on the other hand, both our *Virtue* here, and our *Happineſs* hereafter, will not fail to receive freſh Improvement from *every Addition* of true *Faith.*—But when Faith is conſidered as a *neceſſary Condition*, ſome determinate *Quantity* of Faith muſt needs be underſtood. For whatever Degree is *ſufficient*, *more* than that cannot be *neceſſary*; and whatever Degree

gree is *neceſſary*, *leſs* than that will not be *ſufficient*. We are therefore to inquire what is the *loweſt* Degree of Faith, which is ſufficient to intitle a Man to Admiſſion into the Chriſtian Church; ſince that, and that only, is *neceſſary* for this Purpoſe.

Now the Neceſſity of Faith muſt either ariſe from the Declarations and Practiſe of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, or from the *Nature* of the Thing itſelf. What is neither requiſite in *itſelf*, nor *made* requiſite by them, may certainly be pronounced *unneceſſary*.—I ſhould begin with the Neceſſity deducible from *Scripture*. But in this Part of my Inquiry I am, in a great Meaſure, *prevented* by *Mr. Locke's Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity*. Whatever may be thought of the *Inferences* he would deduce from it, yet his *general Doctrine* is undeniably plain: I mean, that nothing was required of the firſt Proſelytes of the Goſpel, but to believe that *Jeſus was a true Prophet*. Not one *Command*, not one *Precedent* has yet been produced on the contrary Side. Whatever Reaſons therefore may have been invented, in later Ages, for requiring a more *explicit* Faith, the *Scripture* teaches no ſuch Thing; and therefore ought not to be charged with the Iniquity or Abſurdity of Human Impoſitions: I mean, on *Suppoſition* that the Arguments of our Adverſaries have all that Weight which they themſelves pretend.

THAT no Man ought to be admitted into Covenant with *Chriſt*, who denies the Truth and Authority of his *Miſſion*, is ſurely a moſt *reaſonable* Demand. But as this has never been conteſted, it would be loſt Labour to enter upon the Proof of it.—I ſhall only obſerve that the *ſame* Unbelief, which diſqualifies a Man for *Admiſſion* into the Church, equally diſqualifies him for *Continuance* in it. The Church therefore is fully juſtified in openly rejecting ſuch Members, as have caſt off their *firſt Faith.*

BUT though I am forced to agree with the Author above-mentioned that nothing further than this can be *directly* inferred from *Scripture*; yet I ſhall by no means agree with him that we are to *ſtop* here. Whether we judge from *Reaſon* or *Analogy*, I preſume we ſhall readily diſcover, that they whoſe Faith extends no farther than this can neither *become* nor *continue* true Members of the Church of *Chriſt.* — It is poſſible to *believe* the *Miſſion* of our Saviour, and at the ſame Time to *diſbelieve* all his *Doctrines:* not only ſo, but to be utterly deſtitute of all the *Means* of better Information. That *Jeſus* was a Prophet ſent from God is a Doctrine acknowleged by the *Mahometans* themſelves. And ſhall we then unite into *one Church* the Followers of *Mahomet*, and the Followers of *Chriſt*? Nothing

thing can be imagined more abſurd.—Let it then be conſidered, wherein this Abſurdity conſiſts? what it is that renders ſuch an Union ſo apparently ridiculous and impracticable? The Anſwer to this Queſtion will probably furniſh us with the true Key for diſcovering the *preciſe* Quantity of Faith, which is *neceſſary* to conſtitute us *Chriſtians*.

Now it ſeems to me that an Union in Religion preſuppoſes a perfect Agreement with regard to the *Rule* of Faith and Manners. I do not mean that Perſons of the *ſame* Religion may not follow Rules of *different Extent*: for in this reſpect there would be a manifeſt Diſagreement between *Catholics* and *Proteſtants*. But I call that Agreement *perfect*, which is perfect *as far as it goes*: I mean, when the *intire* Rule of *either* Party is owned and profeſſed by the *other*; only with the *Addition* of a Rule peculiar to itſelf. Thus the Romaniſts acknowlege the *Truth* of the *Scriptures*; tho' they *add* to it the Authority of *Tradition*, and the Infallibility of the *Church*. And had *Mahomet* alſo acknowleged the *Truth* and *Integrity* of the Scriptures, I will not affirm that his Pretence to a new Revelation would have diſqualified him for the Church of *Chriſt*.—The Abſurdity therefore above-mentioned reſults ſolely from hence, that the *Followers* of *Mahomet* are *Enemies* to the *Goſpel*: and whoever agrees with them in that *one* Point may

may with *equal* Reaſon be excluded the Church. So that beſides a *general* Belief in *Chriſt*, a *particular* Acknowlegement of the *Truth* of the *New Teſtament* is an indiſpenſable Condition of *Chriſtian Communion*. Without this, our *Faith* in *Chriſt* would be utterly *vain* and *inſignificant*.—Whether *this* Degree of Faith is to be eſteemed *ſufficient*, will be briefly conſidered afterwards: that *leſs* than this *cannot* be ſufficient, appears, in ſome meaſure, from what has been already ſaid. Let me only add, that to *believe* in *Chriſt*, and at the ſame time to deny the *Truth* of the *Scriptures*, is, properly ſpeaking, to believe only this; *That in Times paſt a Prophet was ſent into the World, who taught certain Doctrines now unknown*. For *unknown* they are and muſt be, if the *Goſpel* does not contain a faithful Account of them. Whether this Prophet was called *Socrates* or *Chriſt*; whether he was put to Death at *Athens* or *Jeruſalem*; whether his Followers be long ſince *extinct*, or whether Numbers ſtill *remain*, who affect to be *called* by his *Name*; theſe Things are of no Conſequence at all.—In ſhort, to borrow an Expreſſion of a Celebrated Author, ſuch a Faith amounts only to this; That *Somebody taught Something*. And whether this ſhould be made the Principle of *Church Communion*, I leave our Adverſaries to judge.

IT ſeems then to be the Voice of *Reaſon*, that no Man ſhould be *admitted* into the Chriſtian Church, or ſuffered to *continue* in it; who is not ready to ſubſcribe theſe two Propoſitions.

1. THAT Jeſus was *a Teacher ſent from God.*

2. THAT the Books of the New Teſtament contain a faithful Account of the *Doctrines* he *taught.*

SO far is the Scripture from *contradicting* this Notion, that we may draw from thence an *Analogical* Argument, which will ſerve to ſtrengthen and confirm it.—Whatever Degree of *Infidelity* was eſteemed by the Apoſtles ſufficient Ground for *excluding* Men from the Church, the oppoſite Degree of *Faith* is a *neceſſary* Qualification for Men's *Admiſſion* to it, or *Continuance* in it. But it ſeems that all ſuch Perſons, as *knowingly* oppoſed the *Doctrines* of the *Apoſtles* were thought unworthy of Fellowſhip with the Church. Now what the Apoſtles *themſelves* were to the firſt Chriſtians, that the *Scriptures* are to us. What we cannot learn from their *Mouths*, we muſt learn from their *Pens*; and *Oppoſition* to their *Writings* is *now* the very ſame Thing, as Oppoſition to their *Perſons* was *formerly*. For as to *various Lections*, or ſuppoſed *Interpolations*, they do not ſeem of Conſequence ſufficient to affect the Rule here laid down.—

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The Concluſion is, that they who *oppoſe* the *Scriptures*, are utterly *diſqualified* for *Church Communion.*

THAT nothing further was required of the firſt Converts, but ſimply to *believe* in *Chriſt*, is more *true* than *pertinent*: becauſe the *Reaſon* of that Conduct does not now ſubſiſt.—They who had been convinced by our *Saviour*'s Miracles, that *God was with him*, could not poſſibly doubt of the Truth of his *Doctrines*: and they who had the Happineſs of a *perſonal Correſpondence* might be ſure of *knowing* what theſe Doctrines were. In like Manner the Preaching of the *Apoſtles* convinced and *inſtructed* at once: So that *Belief* and *Ignorance* were in a manner *incompatible*; a Belief, I mean, of their Divine *Miſſion*, and an Ignorance of thoſe fundamental *Doctrines* they were ſent to teach in all the World. No wonder then that a *general* Belief was ſufficient, when it unavoidably drew after it a full and particular Information.—But this is no Precedent for *us*. Becauſe *our* Circumſtances are widely *different*. A Man may now take upon him *the Name of Chriſt*, without knowing one Syllable of *Chriſtianity*; and therefore the Fact maintained by Mr. *Locke*, however true in itſelf, will afford no Shadow of Argument againſt *any* Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution whatever; much leſs againſt inſiſting

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on *that* Form of Communion for which I am here pleading.

But what ſhall we ſay to thoſe Perſons, who agree with us in a *Belief* of the Scriptures, but differ in the *Interpretation* of them? differ even in thoſe Articles which appear to us of the greateſt *Importance?*——I anſwer, *1ſt*, It does not appear from *Scripture* that ſuch Perſons are to be excluded the *Church*. The Heretics, there mentioned, ſeem to have denied *thoſe* Doctrines, which they *knew* to have been taught by the Apoſtles themſelves. But that the Apoſtles would have excommunicated a Chriſtian merely for *miſtaking* their *Meaning*, does not appear from any Thing they have ſaid. On the contrary it ſeems highly probable that they took Care to *rectify* all dangerous Miſtakes, by explaining themſelves more fully and more clearly in thoſe Inſtances, where they had been miſunderſtood. —But then, *2dly*, I obſerve, that under a *Standing Revelation* the Advantage juſt mentioned is not to be had; and, of conſequence, that we are now liable to a great Variety of Errors, which in the firſt Age of the Goſpel could not poſſibly ſubſiſt. Our *Circumſtances* therefore being ſo greatly *altered*, it is by no means to be preſumed, *merely* from the Practiſe of the Apoſtles, that all poſſible Miſtakes in interpreting Scripture are compatible with Church-Communion.—Theſe two Obſervations taken together

together ſhew, if I miſtake not, that the New Teſtament itſelf has left this Matter altogether *undetermined.* I therefore obſerve, 3*dly*, That we are to be *ſolely* directed by the *Reaſon* of the Thing. Or in other Words thus; Whatever Terms of Communion beſt ſerve the *Ends* of Communion; whatever Terms moſt effectually promote the *Knowlege* and *Practiſe* of true Religion; theſe, and theſe only, ought to be made the Terms of *Chriſtian Communion.*——If any Man require me to be yet more *particular*, I muſt anſwer as follows. No *ſingle* Man ought to be denied the *Benefits* of *Communion*, unleſs the *Conceſſion* of theſe Benefits redound to the *Damage* of the whole *Society.* No Chriſtian Society, *ſpiritually* conſidered, does or can receive Damage, by the ſame Means which promote and confirm a right Underſtanding of the *Scriptures.* No Means are more effectual for this End, than a fair, and diligent, and impartial Inquiry. No Inquiry is ſo *likely* to deſerve this Character, as that which is free from *Reſtraint*, of what Kind ſoever. And laſtly, no Inquiry is free from Reſtraint, which is accompanied with the *Danger* of *Excluſion* from the *Church.*—I ſay nothing of Men's Admiſſion to Offices of Power and Truſt, whether *Civil* or *Eccleſiaſtical.* How far the *ſame* Method of Reaſoning may be extended to *theſe* Caſes, is a Point in which I

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am not concerned, and which I therefore leave to be determined by others. I ſpeak only of the *general* Terms of Chriſtian Communion. And, with regard to theſe, I am forced to conclude, in thoſe celebrated Words of the great *Chillingworth*, that we *ought not to require more of any Man than this*; *to* believe *the Scripture to be God's Word*, *to* endeavour *to find out the true Senſe of it, and to* live *according to it.*

I FIND I have been inſenſibly drawn into a Subject not *eſſential* to my preſent Deſign. —What was incumbent upon me to ſhew was only this.—*1ſt*, That the New Teſtament requires no other *Condition* of our entering into *Covenant* with *Chriſt*, and partaking in the Privileges of *his Church*, but that we *believe* in his *Name*: and, *2dly*, That this Condition is perfectly agreeable to Right Reaſon.—If *Reaſon* itſelf require *other* Conditions; this has no Relation to any Objections that can be brought againſt the Scripture Doctrine of the *Neceſſity* of *Faith.*

WE have hitherto conſidered Faith as a *previous* Qualification, without which we are not allowed to *enter* into the Chriſtian *Church*, and to *take upon us* the Chriſtian *Covenant*. We are now to conſider it as belonging to the *Covenant itſelf.*———Let me here premiſe, That the Word *Covenant* ſignifies nothing

more, in the *Scripture* Senſe of it, but a *conditional Promiſe*, humbly *accepted* on *our* Part, of ſignal Favours from the Hand of *God*: That the *Favour* propoſed, in the *Goſpel* Covenant, is no other than *Eternal Life*: and laſtly, that the *Condition* required is a *Complyance* with *thoſe* Terms which our Saviour Chriſt has thought fit to *impoſe*. What theſe *are* muſt be known from his own Words: what they *are not*, may be known, in many Inſtances, from the Light of our own *Reaſon*.—That *Faith* in *ſome* Senſe, is of the Number, no Man can doubt who believes the Goſpel. In *what Senſe*, and with *what Propriety*, is the Point we are now to examine. —And for this Purpoſe I can think of no readier Way, than immediately to produce that remarkable Paſſage, in which the indiſpenſable Neceſſity of Faith is moſt clearly, and moſt expreſſly taught. I ſhall attempt to free it from thoſe Interpretations, which appear to me abſurd and irrational; to diſcover a different Interpretation, which may be agreeable to Reaſon; and laſtly, to eſtabliſh the *Truth* of it, and to prove that the very *Words* of our Saviour will bear no other without *Violence*.— When this is done, I ſee not what can be wanting to the rational Support of my *Third* and laſt Propoſition.

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THE Paſſage itſelf runs thus, *He that believeth—ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.*

BEFORE I inquire particularly into the Meaning of theſe Words, I muſt obſerve, 1*ſt*, That *Salvation* is, in Effect, the very ſame Thing with *Remiſſion of Sins*; they only being *ſaved*, whoſe Sins are *forgiven*. 2*dly*, That both theſe Expreſſions coincide with that other, of *entering into the Kingdom of Heaven*, or of *inheriting Eternal Life*. Thus we find (in Matth. xxv.) the bleſſed Sentence, *Enter into the Kingdom prepared for you* (which *Kingdom* appears from the Context to be *Life eternal*) is indiſcriminately pronounced on all Thoſe, who *eſcape* Everlaſting *Condemnation*. The Scripture knows no *intermediate* State; but places *all* Mankind on the *Right-Hand*, or on the *Left*: 3*dly*, It follows from hence, that *every* Perſon, whoſe *Sins* are *forgiven*, will partake in the Grand *Benefit* annexed to the *Covenant* of the *Goſpel*. And, 4*thly*, That *all* thoſe, who *fail* of obtaining *Goſpel-Rewards*, muſt inevitably ſuffer *Goſpel-Puniſhments*.

THIS being premiſed, we ſhall be better able to conſider the various Interpretations of the Paſſage before us; and to diſcover their Agreement or Diſagreement with the Principles of Right Reaſon.

Now the firſt and moſt obvious Senſe of the Words is this; *that all Believers ſhall be ſaved, and all Unbelievers damned, without any Exception or Reſtriction.*

But whatever be the Meaning of the Words in Queſtion; this, we are ſure, is *not* the Meaning.—If it were, we muſt ſuppoſe Men's final and irreverſible State to depend on a Qualification not in their own *Power*. For ſurely it is not in Men's Power to believe in a Goſpel of which they have never *heard*; and how ſmall a Proportion of the Inhabitants of this Globe, if we reckon from the *Creation* to the *preſent* Times, have ever heard the Name of *Chriſt?* It would follow manifeſtly from this Suppoſition, that the greater Part of Mankind came into the World without a *Poſſibility* of avoiding Damnation. A Conſequence highly injurious to the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of Almighty God! An Aſſertion therefore, which neceſſarily infers ſuch a Conſequence *could* not proceed from the Mouth of our Saviour.—From the ſame Suppoſition it would likewiſe follow that the moſt flagrant *Sinners* were in a ſafe Way to Salvation. For ſuch Men are certainly to be found in the Number of thoſe who *believe* in *Chriſt*. But this alſo is repugnant to the Perfections of God, and therefore *could* not be affirmed by the *Son* of *God*.

Again,

AGAIN, both the Parts of the Text, ſo interpreted, plainly contradict *other* Texts: thoſe, I mean, which make *Holineſs* a neceſſary Qualification for *Heaven*; and thoſe which repreſent God's *Goodneſs* as without *Limits*, and without *Partiality*. But the Scripture cannot contradict itſelf; and therefore our Saviour *could* not mean what this Interpretation ſuppoſes.

LASTLY, If we conſider the Words themſelves, we ſhall find them plainly *referring* to the *preceding* Verſe. But the preceding Verſe *requires* a Reſtriction. For, in an *unreſtrained* and *literal* Senſe, the Apoſtles neither did nor could *preach the Goſpel to every Creature*. The *following* Verſe therefore may on this *ſingle* Account be juſtly confined to thoſe Perſons, among whom the Goſpel was *actually* preached. Whoever extends it further than *this*, extends it further than the *Words* will bear.

A 2*d* Interpretation is this, That they who believe and *obey* the Goſpel, are intitled to God's *covenanted* Bleſſings; but that *all* Unbelievers, whether *before* or *ſince* the Coming of Chriſt, whether *virtuous* or *vicious*, will be intirely *excluded*. To guard againſt the Difficulties of the *laſt* Interpretation, the Defenders of *this* are not unwilling to grant, that poſſibly ſome *lower* Degrees of Favour,

ſome *unknown* and *uncovenanted* Mercies may be finally reſerved for *good Heathens*.—According to which Notion *Faith* in *Chriſt* is, in a ſtrict and *literal* Senſe, an indiſpenſable Condition of the *Goſpel-Covenant*.

But neither is this a *true* Interpretation. If we attend to *Reaſon*, we ſhall never be brought to believe, that God ſhould promiſe and beſtow *peculiar Favour*, on any other Ground than *peculiar Virtue*. Chriſtians therefore cannot be *happier*, unleſs *better* than other Men. And, notwithſtanding what has been obſerved under the 2*d* Head, yet it ſeems very improbable that the *wiſeſt* Heathen, ſuppoſing him *equally* well-diſpoſed, ſhould fall ſhort in Perfection of the *meaneſt* Chriſtian.—Let it not be ſaid that Chriſtians ſhall be favoured on Account of their *Relation* to *Jeſus Chriſt*; ſince a cauſeleſs Deviation from the Rule of *Diſtributive Juſtice*, is what neither He could *ask*, nor God *beſtow*.——Notwithſtanding the Prevalence of a contrary Opinion, it ſeems to me *moſt* evident that *Revelation* aſſerts the very ſame Thing. For thus I argue—The Title of a *Chriſtian to covenanted* Bleſſings ſolely ariſes from the *Covenant* itſelf; from the expreſs *Promiſe* of Almighty God. If then this Promiſe extend to *Unbelievers*, *they* too have a *Covenant Right*. But now this Promiſe extends to all thoſe, who obtain

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Forgiveneſs of *Sins* through the *Blood* of *Chriſt*. If then it be true that Chriſt died for *all Men*, the Promiſe muſt be underſtood without *Reſtriction*; without any *other* Reſtriction, than what neceſſarily ariſes from the very Nature of the Thing: which indeed amounts only to this, that Chriſt died, not to *ſave* Mankind, but to put them in a *Capacity* of ſaving *themſelves*; I mean to procure them an Inſurance of *Pardon*, on Condition of their ſincere *Repentance*. Leſs, I think, cannot be underſtood by the *Univerſality* of our Redemption, than that all Mankind have it in their *Power* to obtain Salvation thro' Chriſt*.

——But if any Perſon ſhall ſtill maintain, that the Promiſe of Eternal Life belongs only to *Chriſtians*, I deſire him to conſider theſe Words of St. *Paul* (1 Tim. iv. 10.) —*who is the Saviour of all Men, eſpecially of thoſe that believe*. Dr. *Whitby*, with great Reaſon, rejects the Opinion of thoſe Perſons, who confined this *Salvation* to Deliverance from *Temporal* Dangers: ſince it cannot but refer to that *faithful Saying*, contained in the 8th Verſe; *Godlineſs is profitable unto all Things; having Promiſe of the Life which now is, and of that which is to come*. We have then a plain Text, in which the Bleſſings of a *Fu-*

* See 1 John ii. 2. with numberleſs others to the ſame Purpoſe.

ture Life, though more *eſpecially* belonging to *thoſe that believe*, are yet, in *ſome* Degree, promiſed to *all Men*.—It will be of no Conſequence to allege, that none but *Chriſtians* have actually *embraced* the Promiſes of God, and *accepted* the Covenant propoſed to them: ſince this, we find, was not neceſſary, even with reſpect to the *Jewiſh* Covenant. *If the Uncircumciſion keep the* Righteouſneſs (that is, the *Moral* Part) of the Law, *ſhall not his Uncircumciſion be counted for Circumciſion?* (Rom. ii. 26.) How much more if he who is *unbaptized* keep the Righteouſneſs of the *Chriſtian* Law, ſhall his *Want of Baptiſm* be counted for *Baptiſm?* Whoever conſiders the *Analogy* between Circumciſion and Baptiſm, will be forced to allow the two Arguments to be alike concluſive, or alike inconcluſive. If the *former* prove the Title of the *Gentiles* to the Privileges of the *Jewiſh* Covenant; the *latter* will prove the Title of *Heathens* to the Privileges of the *Chriſtian* Covenant; ſuppoſing, in *both* Caſes, that they who *have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law*. In ſhort the true State of the Caſe is only this: that *not the Hearers*, or Believers, *of the Law* (whether *Jewiſh* or *Chriſtian*,) *but the Doers of it are juſtified* before God.—One Argument remains, which I hope will be deciſive. I have already obſerved, that

that *Forgiveneſs* of *Sins*, or an intire *Exemption* from Future *Penalties*, is, in the Scripture Language, ſtiled *Salvation*: and that this Salvation is inſeparably connected with our *Admiſſion* to Chriſt's *heavenly Kingdom*, and our *Participation* of *Eternal Life*. If therefore we are ſure from Reaſon and Scripture, that honeſt *Heathens* ſhall eſcape *the Wrath to come*, which, I think, is generally admitted by *Proteſtant* Writers; it follows that they are *included* in thoſe Words of our Saviour, (Matth. xxv. laſt Verſe) *the Righteous* ſhall go *into Life eternal*. Nothing is clearer, than that the grand Diviſion, repreſented to us in this Chapter, takes in our *whole Species*. They who are *not* placed on the *Left Hand* will be placed on the *Right*; and they, who are placed on the Right, are here called *righteous*. If therefore there be *any* Heathen, who eſcapes *Everlaſting Puniſhment*, he will *then* be *numbered* among the *righteous*; and if ſo, he has, by Virtue of our Saviour's *Promiſe*, a *Covenant Right* to *Eternal Life*.—That the Covenant is *conditional* is moſt certain: were it otherwiſe, it could not be *called* a Covenant. But to ſay that *actual* Belief in Chriſt is, *literally* ſpeaking, an *eſſential* Condition, is to make the Salvation of more than half Mankind altogether *impoſſible*.—I am ſenſible that Endeavours have been uſed to confine the

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Goſpel-Repreſentations of a Future Judgment to the *Believing World:* but ſurely in vain; unleſs *Tyrians* and *Sidonians, Ninevites* and *Sodomites* can be conſidered as *Believers.* For theſe are all expreſſly numbered by our Saviour himſelf, among thoſe who are to be *judged* by him at the *great Day.* We hear indeed of the Prophets *preaching* to ſome of them; but that *Preaching* manifeſtly means nothing more, than a Denunciation of God's Wrath againſt thoſe Nations for their great Wickedneſs and grievous Enormities. Not the leaſt Expectation, as far as appears, was either given them, or conceived by them, of a *Saviour* to come.

I CONCLUDE, upon the whole, that an honeſt Heathen has the *ſame* Title to Salvation, which we *our ſelves* have; with this *only* Difference, that he *knows* it *not.* If on *this* Account it be *improper* to ſay God has *promiſed* him Salvation; yet his Right is equally ſtrong in itſelf: being founded on the *expreſs* Declarations of him who *cannot* lye. To *whom* theſe Declarations were made, is, I preſume, of no Conſequence.

BUT though it be allowed that Good Heathens have a ſure *Title* to *Eternal Happineſs*; yet will not the Happineſs of *Chriſtians* be greatly *ſuperior?* Will not *ſignal* Privileges, and *extraordinary* Favours be conferred on faith-

faithful *Believers?* I anſwer, *that* will depend on their *Moral Goodneſs.* If they make a right *Uſe* of the Advantages they enjoy, I have not only *acknowleged*, but *maintained*; that their *Faith* will increaſe their *Virtue*, and their *Virtue* improve their *Happineſs.* But that they ſhall be honoured with *peculiar* Privileges, merely becauſe they *happen* to be *Chriſtians*, without Regard to their *Moral* Improvements; is a Doctrine, as I apprehend, *unſupported* by *Scripture*, and directly *oppoſite* to *Right Reaſon.* Sure I am, the Paſſage in Queſtion admits of no ſuch Interpretation. The Word *Damnation* cannot poſſibly ſignify *ſuch* an Excluſion from the Privileges of the Goſpel, as neither *ſuppoſes* Blame, nor *infers* Puniſhment. On the contrary it does and muſt import the *Sentence* to be pronounced on *Evil Doers:* ſince he who is *innocent* cannot be *condemned.*

ACCORDING to a 3*d* Interpretation the Words in the latter Part of the Verſe are to be taken *literally* as far as they *reach*; but then they are to be *reſtrained* to thoſe *Perſons*, among whom the Goſpel has been *actually* preached. This indeed will be more ſuitable to the *Context*, than either of the former.——But ſtill the *main* Difficulty remains. The Condemnation of *all Unbelievers*, even in this *narrower* Senſe of the Word, will not eaſily

eaſily be *reconciled* with the *Perfections* of *God.* For may not a fair and candid Inquirer, deſirous and reſolved to do his Duty, unhappily determine, without his own Fault, on the *wrong* Side of the Queſtion? May he not want *Capacity* to ſee, or *Leiſure* to examine as he ought the Evidences of Revealed Religion? May not his Mind have taken a wrong *Tincture*, from an early Infuſion of erroneous Opinions? May not the *Authority* of Friends and Parents have thrown inſurmountable Obſtacles in his Way, to prevent him from coming at the *Truth?* And may not the whole Courſe of his *Converſation* have lain among *Enemies* to the *Faith?* Concerning the *Frequency* of theſe Caſes I pretend not to determine. I fear the general Conduct of *modern* Deiſts will not ſuffer us to be very *ſanguine* in Expectations or Aſſertions of that Nature. But ſurely the Thing is not *impoſſible.*—Not only at the firſt Appearance of Chriſtianity, but even in our own Times, it is eaſy to *conceive* ſuch Circumſtances, in which *Infidelity* would be *no Crime.*—This I doubt not will be *denied*, as it often *has* been denied, by thoſe Men who have *a Zeal for Chriſt, but not according to Knowlege.* Let ſuch Perſons be pleaſed to conſider the great Differences among Chriſtians themſelves, in regard to the *Proofs* of their Religion; what Vari-

Variety of Opinions ſubſiſt among them concerning the Validity of *every* Kind of Argument, that of *Miracles* not accepted; and let them learn from thence that it is *poſſible* at leaſt for *Good Men* not to ſee, what *Good Chriſtians* have ſought for in *vain*. If a Man may honeſtly refuſe Aſſent to *one* Kind of Proof; if *different* Men, without Suſpicion of Blame, may deny the Force of *different* Proofs; and *no* Proof ſeems concluſive to *all*: why may not an *Infidel* be *ſincere*, who only happens to *unite* the various Opinions of Men *confeſſedly* honeſt?—I hope it will not be anſwered by any Chriſtian, that no Man can poſſibly be ſaved, unleſs he ſees the Force of thoſe *very* Arguments, which have proved ſufficient to convince *Him*.

If then I may be allowed to ſuppoſe an *honeſt* Infidel, I muſt ſuppoſe a Caſe to which this *Damnatory* Sentence *cannot* extend. For *unavoidable* Ignorance, wherever it exiſts, cannot be obnoxious to *Blame* or *Puniſhment*. It is to all Intents and Purpoſes the very ſame Thing, whether Men have never *heard* of Chriſt; or have received no *Evidence* of his Divine Miſſion; or have received an Evidence, which, tho' concluſive to *others*, is to *them* of *no Force*. In *all* theſe Caſes their Plea is ſtill the *ſame*; it is impoſſible that the *ſingle*

ſingle Circumſtance of *Ignorance* or *Unbelief*, a Circumſtance out of their own *Power*, and not depending on their *Wills*, ſhould expoſe them to *Everlaſting Puniſhment*. And if not, I apprehend it has been already ſhewn, that they have a *Federal* Right to *Life Eternal*.

But if theſe Interpretations are all to be rejected; how can we vindicate our *former* Aſſertion, That *Faith* in *Chriſt* is a *neceſſary* Condition of the *Goſpel Covenant*? or how is it poſſible to explain our Saviour's Words *conſiſtently* with the *Notions* I have been maintaining?—I anſwer by producing a

4th Interpretation; which, though I do not apprehend it to be the *true* Senſe of the *Words*, will yet well deſerve to be conſidered; becauſe it contains a Doctrine no way repugnant to *Reaſon*, and a *ſufficient* Anſwer to the Queſtion. The Interpretation I mean confines the latter Part of the Verſe to thoſe who enjoy ſufficient *Evidence*, and ſufficient *Capacity* to diſcern it; and in *theſe* Perſons Faith is ſtrictly *neceſſary*.——The *undoubted* Terms of the Chriſtian Covenant are *Repentance* and *Amendment* of Life: Amendment not in *one* or a *few* Inſtances, but in *all* Points of Duty, where we have been *deficient*. So that this Condition evidently comprehends *every* Branch of *Moral Virtue*: and if *Faith* itſelf be a real *Virtue*, it is a real *Condition* of our Salvation.

—But

—But what ſhall we ſay to thoſe Men, by whom this Virtue is *unattainable?* Do they therefore *forfeit* their Right to Salvation? By no Means. *If there be firſt a willing Mind; it is accepted according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not.* He who is ſincerely deſirous to know and perform his Duty, can never *fail* of Acceptance with God, on account of *unavoidable* Defects, of what Kind ſoever.

But does not our Saviour affirm *univerſally*, without giving the leaſt Hint of ſuch an Indulgence? He does ſo: and would certainly have done the very ſame, had he been ſpeaking of any *other* Moral Virtue. But it is well known, and univerſall agreed, that the Extent of Men's *Duty* is greatly different, when conſidered *materially*, and *formally*. And the very *ſame* Diſtinction is certainly to be applied to the *Conditions* of our *Salvation*. If we conſider them, as they are in *themſelves*; *Faith* is and ought to be a *General Condition*: but if *relatively* to the Capacities of particular Perſons; the Propoſition then amounts only to this, That, proper Means and Opportunities *ſuppoſed*, a Defect of *Faith* is a Defect of *Virtue*, and *therefore* deſtructive to our *Salvation*. In other Words, a *wilful Neglect* of examining Revealed Religion, or a *corrupt* and *partial* Examination, *will* be puniſhed, becauſe it *deſerves*

ſerves to be puniſhed. It is our Duty, and our Intereſt, to *obey* the *Divine Will.* But we *cannot* obey it, unleſs we *know* it; and we *cannot* know it, if we neglect the *Means*, which God himſelf has put into our Power.—In *this* Senſe therefore *Faith* in *Chriſt* is a neceſſary Condition of the Goſpel-Covenant; and there is, I believe, no *one* Virtue, which can be ſaid to be neceſſary in any *other* Senſe. The *formal* Neceſſity of *any* Condition whatever will *always* depend on the *Abilities* of the *Agent.*

AND yet this Senſe, however *reaſonable*, cannot, I think, be the *true* Senſe of the Paſſage we have been ſo long conſidering. My Reaſon is, becauſe, on this Suppoſition, the two *ſimilar* Clauſes in this Verſe would not *correſpond* to each other; both of them would be underſtood with a *Reſtriction*, but the Reſtrictions would be extremely *different.* For thus it would run—*Believers* ſhall be *ſaved*, if they act up to their Principles; *Unbelievers* ſhall be *damned*, if—what? if their Unbelief is owing to Negligence and Partiality. This appears to me *quite* unnatural. I ſhall therefore propoſe a

5th Interpretation, to which I am led by this very Reflection.—It is in ſhort only this. They who *believe* not the Goſpel, are not *likely* to obey it's *Laws*; and they who *obey* not

not it's Laws, *cannot* be *ſaved.* I am forced to ſuppoſe the *Neceſſity* of *Faith*, here intended by our Saviour, to be not a *literal*, not an *hypothetical*, but a *figurative* Neceſſity; implying nothing more than it's *great Importance.*—I am very ſenſible this Interpretation will appear to *many* Perſons a moſt unwarrantable *Violence* on the plain Words of Scripture. To *me* it appears *natural*, and *unavoidable.* The Reaſons, *why* it appears ſo, I am now to produce.

It is very uſual, in common Speech, to conſider *Difficulties* as *Impoſſibilities:* and the *greater* the Difficulty of which we are ſpeaking, the *more natural* is this Expreſſion. Strictly ſpeaking, nothing is *impoſſible* but *Contradictions:* and yet it is manifeſt, at firſt Sight, that, when we pronounce a Thing impoſſible, we ſeldom intend to affirm it in *this* Senſe; we only mean to ſay that it is *highly* improbable; we only mean a *moral*, that is, a *figurative* Impoſſibility.

Now we have already ſhewn that Unbelievers are in great *Danger* of falling ſhort of Salvation. We have ſhewn this, on Suppoſition that *Reaſon* was cultivated and improved in the beſt Manner. Both the *Motives* ſhe propoſes, and the *Means* ſhe offers, are incomparably *inferior* to thoſe of *Revelation*; and yet even *theſe*, great as they are, are found

in *Fact*, *far* from ſufficient to reclaim the *Generality* of Mankind. It would not therefore have been ſtrange, if our Saviour had ſaid, That without Faith in Him *no Man* can be ſaved. We ſhould only have underſtood him in the ſame *qualified* Senſe, as when he tells us, on another Occaſion, That *it is eaſier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a* rich *Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Every one may perceive that ſuch *general* Expreſſions ought not to be *tied down* to the *literal* Senſe; but always interpreted with *ſuch* Reſtrictions, as the *Reaſon* of the Caſe ſuggeſts to us.—But this is not all: for in the *preſent* Inſtance the Context itſelf will not allow us to underſtand our Saviour without a *further* Limitation. Had he affirmed in general, That *all* Unbelievers are in a doubtful and dangerous State, he had only affirmed a *certain* Truth. But his Words do not imply even thus much. They were certainly ſpoken with a *peculiar* Regard to the *actual* State of the World at *that* Time; and to the very Perſons who received the Goſpel from the Hands of the *Apoſtles themſelves*. And in this View the *Figure* is yet more *natural*, becauſe the Danger was yet *greater*; becauſe the *Improbability* of ſuch Men's Salvation was without Queſtion *exceeding* great. If this *ſupernatural* Meſſage, to call them to Repentance,

tance, failed of producing it's *due* Effect; what *other* Means could ever reclaim them? Or how could it be expected that *weaker* Means ſhould be ſufficient, when *ſtronger* had been uſed to no Purpoſe?—In this *Reſpect*, and on this *Account*, our Saviour might ſurely affirm, *that he who believeth not, ſhall be damned.*

To make this Interpretation ſtill more eaſy, let it be farther conſidered, that theſe *Effects* of *Infidelity* are not to be eſtimated by the *Event*, but by it's natural *Tendency*. To disbelieve the Chriſtian Religion is in *itſelf* a *Means* of *Ruin*; however this Ruin may by *other* Means be prevented. On *this* Account therefore we cannot wonder that Infidelity is here conſidered as the *Ground* and *Reaſon* of our Condemnation.

From what has been ſaid, I imagine, it ſufficiently appears, that this Explication is not *unnatural*. But that it is a *true* Explication, remains yet to be ſhewn.—And ſurely it is *ſome* Preſumption in it's Favour, that it is both agreeable to *Reaſon*, and to *other* Paſſages in *Holy Scripture*. I ſhall not waſt Time in proving the *former*: the *latter* may perhaps be thought leſs evident. But, not to inſiſt on the repeated Declarations, that virtuous Men, of all Ages and Nations, ſhall be favoured of God, and rewarded by him; that

he is *no Reſpecter of Perſons*, but *good to all*; and that *Heaven* and *Hell* ſhall finally be adjudged according to Men's good or evil *Doings*: not to inſiſt on all this, I deſire it may be obſerved, that, in thoſe Places where *Infidelity* is moſt ſtrongly condemned, it is almoſt always *joined* with *Impenitence*, and *ſuppoſed* to be *inſeparably connected*. I ſhall only mention one Inſtance, becauſe it is very remarkable. When our Saviour reproves the Unbelief of ſome of the principal Cities of *Judæa*, and threatens them with the dire Effects of it, he particularly compares *their* Caſe with that of the City *Nineveh*, and affirms the latter to be greatly *preferable*. What now is the *Reaſon* of this Preference? *They*, *ſays He*, *repented at the Preaching of Jonah*, *and behold a greater than Jonah is here*. The Sentence is in ſome Degree *Elliptical*: but the *Meaning* admits of no Diſpute. The *Jews* were *more* blameable than the *Ninevites*; becauſe the latter *repented* upon the Preaching of *Jonah*, the former did *not* repent upon the Preaching of *Chriſt*. It is not then *Infidelity* as ſuch, but taken in Conjunction with it's natural Attendants, *Impenitence* and *Immorality*, to which ſo dreadful a Portion is allotted in the Life to come.

STILL we have defended our Interpetation from *Conjecture* only; let us at length examine

mine the *Words themſelves.*—*He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved:* i. e. To *embrace* the Chriſtian Religion is the *natural* Means of obtaining *Salvation.* Our Saviour did not, and *could* not intend that *all* Believers would be *ſaved:* but that *Faith* in *Him* put them into the *Way* of Salvation; that Faith *naturally* tended to make them *holy* here, and *happy* hereafter. For that in the *Event* it would certainly and *infallibly* ſave them, this could by no Means be ſuppoſed; becauſe our Saviour knew perfectly well, that many of his Followers would be deficient in *Virtue*; and without Virtue there is *no Salvation.*—Whoever maintains that this Part of the Text is to be underſtood *univerſally*, without *any* Exception, will be forced to include under the Word *Faith* the *whole* Idea of *Evangelical Obedience.* And if any Perſon chuſe *this* Way of interpreting, it comes, in Effect, to the *ſame* Thing. One or the other, I think, is conſtantly acknowleged by all *rational* Chriſtians.—Now if the *former* Part of the Verſe is to be thus underſtood, the *latter* Part, which exactly *correſponds* to it, is certainly to be interpreted in a *like* Manner. *He that believeth not, ſhall be damned:* i. e. To *reject* the Chriſtian Religion is the *natural* Means of *Condemnation.* Not that *all* Unbelievers ſhall be condemned; but that Infidelity

natu-

naturally tends to obſtruct Men's Improvements in *Virtue*, and by *that* Means to hinder their *Salvation*. Our Saviour might *poſſibly* foreſee, that ſome *few* among the *Rejectors* of Chriſtianity would, in the *Event*, be *good Men*; and a Good Man *cannot* be condemned. He might know, that *many* of the *Heathens*, both before and after his Appearance in the World, had done *all* that a *Good God* could ever *require* at their *Hands*. But he *alſo* knew that their Proficience in Virtue was owing to *other* Cauſes than *Ignorance* or *Infidelity*; which, conſidered in *themſelves*, have, in all *poſſible* Caſes, a very *bad* and *pernicious* Tendency.—Either this is the true Meaning, or the Word *Infidelity* muſt take in *Diſobedience to the Laws of the Goſpel*. Which ſeems to me *leſs* natural. But it makes no Difference upon the whole, whether we *extend* the Senſe of this Word, or *reſtrain* the Senſe of the *general Aſſertion*. What I contend for is only this, that *both* Parts of the Text ſhould be treated *alike*. I think it highly unreaſonable to *put in* Exceptions to the *former* Part, and to *deny* theſe Exceptions to the *latter*. The *Form* of the two *Clauſes* is exactly the *ſame*: and the *Reaſon* of the *Thing* is the ſame *alſo*. If *Faith* may fail of making Men *virtuous*, *Infidelity* may fail of making them *vicious*. If in the former Caſe Be-

lievers

lievers cannot be *ſaved*; in the latter Unbelievers cannot be *damned*.—Nay the Interpretation of the *latter* Clauſe is, of the two, *leſs forced*: becauſe the *Exceptions*, I fear, are *leſs numerous*. It is not for us to determine the Number; but we cannot help judging it probable that *vicious* Chriſtians are *far* more, in Proportion, than *virtuous* Heathens.—I conclude upon the whole that the true and intire Meaning of our Saviour's Words is no other than this. *He that believeth, and is baptized*, becomes *intituled* to my Kingdom, becauſe *qualified* for it. He is *excited* to his *Duty* by the ſtrongeſt *Motives*, and *ſupported* in it by the moſt powerful *Aſſiſtance*; and is therefore, on both Accounts, in the *high Road* to Happineſs and *Salvation*.—*But he that believeth not*, having rejected thoſe *Means*, and that *Mediator*, by which alone he can be *ſaved*; will ſtill continue under the *Dominion* of *Sin*, and thereby fall into *Condemnation*.

I WOULD endeavour to *contract* the Doctrine maintained, under *this* and the *preceding* Interpretation, that it may appear to the Reader at *one* View.—*Faith* then may juſtly be conſidered as *a neceſſary Condition of the Goſpel-Covenant* in theſe two Reſpects: either 1*ſt*, As it naturally *follows*, or 2*dly*, As it naturally *produces*; EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE. It was *peculiarly* neceſſary in thoſe Perſons, whether

ther *Jews* or *Gentiles*, to whom the Goſpel was *actually* preached by the Apoſtles *themſelves:* ſince *their* Infidelity was both a ſtronger *Preſumption*, and a more probable *Means* of *Bad Conduct*. It was a ſtronger *Preſumption*, on Account of the ſuperior Strength of the *Evidence* which was then granted; it was a more probable *Means* of bad Conduct, on Account of the *loſt* and *deplorable* Condition of almoſt the *whole* World, at the Time of our Saviour's Appearance in it. When Idolatry and Immorality were become in a Manner *univerſal*, *Belief* in *Chriſt* was the *only* Way left, for the *Recovery* and *Salvation* of Mankind. Whoever therefore *rejected* this, unavoidably *continued* in a State of *Condemnation*. —It was at *all* Times true, that, *if they who had not the* Goſpel, *did by Nature the Things contained in the* Goſpel, they had a ſure Title to *Goſpel Rewards*. But as Things were *then* circumſtanced, they who refuſed to own the *Miſſion* of our *Saviour*, had no *Chance* for *obeying* the *Laws* of his *Kingdom*. And they who diſobeyed the Laws of his Kingdom, could have *no Claim* to *Eternal Life*.—*Faith* then and *Obedience* being ſo cloſely *connected*, the *Neceſſity* of the *former immediately* reſults from the *Neceſſity* of the *latter*.

The Reader will obſerve, that I have thus far confined my ſelf to a *general* Belief of *Chriſt's*

Chriſt's Miſſion. If it be aſked, how far the Belief of *particular* Articles may be eſteemed a *neceſſary* Condition? I anſwer, juſt as far, as Men's *Capacities* and *Opportunities* extend. If a Belief in *Chriſt* be not *literally* and *univerſally* neceſſary, much leſs a Belief of any *ſingle* Doctrine. I know it has been generally ſuppoſed by *Proteſtant* Writers, that there are in the Goſpel a few *plain* Things, the Belief of which is *indiſpenſably* required of every Chriſtian. But ſhould it not be conſidered, that what is plain to *ſome*, is *not* plain to *others?* and that hardly *any* Thing is plain to *all?* It *cannot* indeed be imagined, that a ſincere Chriſtian ſhould miſunderſtand *every* Thing in the New Teſtament: it can *hardly* be imagined that he ſhould be *generally* miſtaken. But it does not follow, that, becauſe we all believe *ſome* Part, or even the *greater* Part of the Doctrines of *Chriſt*, we muſt therefore believe the very *ſame* Doctrines. What is *hid* from one Man, may be *known* to another; and yet this *latter* ſhall be *ignorant*, in his Turn, of what is *moſt obvious* to the former. Theſe *Inequalities* and *Varieties* of Judgment, may either be owing to *Conſtitution*, or to *Education*, or to Men's peculiar *Circumſtances* and *Situation* in Life. But whatever be the *Cauſe* of them, of this we are very ſure, that they cannot *poſſibly* endanger our *Eter-*

nal Happineſs. Let us but honeſtly *endeavour* to *believe* and *obey*, in Proportion to our reſpective Abilities, and our Condition *muſt* be *ſecure.*——On the other Hand, it is equally a Miſtake, to ſuppoſe that no religious Doctrines, except thoſe which are peculiarly called *practical*, can be of any conſiderable *Importance* to Mankind. It cannot ſurely be thought that God would reveal *any* Doctrine to his Creatures, merely for Amuſement and *Speculation.* Whatever *He* thinks fit to *teach*, it is our Duty and our Intereſt to *learn.* Nor is it poſſible to name any *one* Propoſition made known to us by *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, the Belief of which may not be greatly *beneficial*, and either *directly* or *indirectly* influence our *Practiſe.*

Upon the whole, I have endeavoured to ſhew that, notwithſtanding different Appearances, the *Scripture Doctrine* of *Faith* is only this; That it *ſprings* from virtuous Diſpoſitions of Mind, and *gives Birth* to others of the ſame Sort; That it is a great and excellent *Means* of *preſerving* us in our *Allegiance* to God, and *improving* us in true *Virtue*; that, by this means, it *ſecures* our *Title* to a happy Eternity, and renders that Eternity ſtill *more happy.*——On the other Hand *Infidelity* may indeed be *innocent*,

cent, but it is alway *dangerous*. It robs *Virtue* of it's firmeſt *Supports*, and diveſts *Vice* of it's greateſt *Terrors*. Hence it *naturally* and *frequently* happens, that Men fall into *Captivity to the Law of Sin*; and thereby *utterly* forfeit *the glorious Liberty of the Children of God*.

F I N I S.

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REMARKS

On the Several

ANSWERS

To the Pamphlet, intitled

Chriſtianity not founded on Argument.

WITH TWO LETTERS

TO

A LEARNED DIVINE

ON THE SAME

SUBJECT.

LONDON:

Printed for M. COOPER, at the *Globe* in *Pater-Noſter-Row.* 1744.

[Price One Shilling and Six-pence.]

PREFACE.

TRUTH is what all men should desire to know, and with meekness endeavour to defend, and promote; more especially the christian truth, which is of the utmost importance to the souls of men, as it nearly concerns their present and future happiness. The favourable opportunity therefore, which the several answers to *Christianity not founded on Argument*, presented, I have endeavoured to improve by writing the remarks here published, from the same motives, and with the same views, by which I was excited to print my supplement to the sermons preached against Popery, at *Salters-Hall*. Nor shall I make any other apology for the matter of them; and as to the manner of my writing them, I chose it, because I thought, the laying such a number of quotations together, was the most likely way of carrying conviction into the consciences of the respective authors; and might perhaps have a better effect upon their admirers and followers, than if I had written a treatise upon the subject in any other form.

The very few alterations, or the small additions by me in some places made to their words, have in no respect weakened the force of their arguments; so that if they were thought sufficiently conclusive in defence of Christianity in general, I think they must also be allowed of equal weight in that particular part of it, to which I have applied them. And, therefore, as those writers value the welfare, and true interest of christian societies, or would put a stop to the cavils and objections of unbelievers, against the christian religion, from the practice of infant-sprinkling; and thereby prevent

the further growth of infidelity; as they desire to be accounted consistent Protestants, and would promote real and unadulterated Christianity, in order to please God the great author of it; I hope, they will now see the necessity there is of a reformation, from all such human *traditions*, by which *the commandments of God* are made void; and, as a motive to induce them more speedily to set about this good work, which will greatly tend to their own credit and true interest, I commit these remarks, with the following letters, to their most serious and christian consideration.

The letters were written in answer to an objection against certain persons submitting to Christ's institution of baptism, which arose in the mind of a very pious and learned divine, author of two volumes of sermons lately published; which were preached in a course of lectures before, and after, his obedience to that sacred ordinance. For when he had got over the arguments urged in Mr. *Emlyn*'s previous question, and some other objections, his submission to that great duty was a long time deferred from this thought: That *baptism, being an ordinance of the introductory kind, was, as such, designed only for those, who had never been admitted to the privileges of the christian church; and therefore could not be properly administered to any, who had taken on them the christian profession, and, in consequence of that, had been admitted to the holy communion*; *tho'* as he confessed to me, *in a very irregular and unjustifiable way and manner*. For he declared, that *he looked upon the sprinkling, which was given him in his infancy, as nothing*, and did not scruple to own himself, *an unbaptized minister of the gospel*; and had several times said, that *the reason, why he forbore communicating at the Lord's table* for several years, *was, because, being unbaptized, he was not, as such, qualified to receive the Lord's-supper*.

He applied to two eminent ministers for satisfaction in the case above-mentioned, but one of them

was

was too long ſilent; and tho' the other ſent him an excellent ſermon or two, which have ſince been printed, and alſo writ him a pretty long letter; yet miſtaking his objection the difficulty ſtill remained, as Mr. —— informed him, deſiring his further thoughts, which were deferred for a long time, either thro' abſence from home, or an application to other affairs: and therefore not obtaining from thoſe worthy miniſters the deſired ſatisfaction, he was pleaſed to tell me, *I had time and leiſure, and he wiſhed I would undertake it.* With this requeſt I was at laſt induced to comply, merely, that I might prevent the ill conſequences of their ſilence.

What he was pleaſed to ſay of my letter in converſation, made it known to other perſons, and ſome of my friends requeſted me *to favour them with a ſight, or hearing of what I had written to him*; ſince which I have been deſired by ſeveral perſons to print that with the ſubſequent letter. But tho' the ſolicitation of friends has very often been given by authors, as the reaſon for ſending their writings abroad; yet I could not eſteem it ſufficient to juſtify this publication, if I did not alſo think with them, that it might in ſome meaſure ſubſerve the cauſe of truth. For which reaſon only I have ſubmitted them to the public, hoping they may become uſeful towards checking the growth of an opinion, which I find ſome very able miniſters, from a miſtaken notion of charity, ariſing from mere good nature, complaiſance, or private friendſhip, ſeem ſomewhat deſirous to promote. They may hope perhaps to eſtabliſh the reputation of Chriſtianity, and prevent ſome attacks from the Deiſts or others, by uniting Chriſtians of all denominations in communion together; but diſcern not, that they are thereby giving them a much greater advantage, by ſapping one or more of the very *foundation principles of the doctrine of Chriſt*, *Heb.* vi. 1, 2; by taking away the fences and deſtroying

ſtroying the very boundary, which Chriſt himſelf has made. But more of this hereafter.

Dr. *Wall*, in his Hiſtory of infant-baptiſm, and in his Defence of the ſame, ſays; ' That all the ' ancient Chriſtians (without the exception of one ' man) do underſtand that rule of our Saviour, ' *John* iii. 5. to mean baptiſm; and that *he* believes ' *Calvin* to be the firſt man that ever denied it ſo ' to be meant.' This is ſo full an atteſtation to the univerſal judgment of all antiquity for 14 or 1500 years in favour of the ſenſe, which I have given of *John* iii. 3, 5, that I could not avoid tranſcribing it for my readers.

And this is further confirmed by the learned Dr. *Whitby*, who in his annotations ſays; ' That ' to *ſee the kingdom of God* here, and to *enter into* it, ' ver. 5. is the ſame thing, and both theſe phraſes ' ſignify to be a real member of that kingdom, and ' to enjoy the bleſſings belonging to them who are ' ſo; ... That Chriſt ſeems to ſpeak this not prima- ' rily of that heavenly kingdom, into which the ' bleſſed ſhall enter at the day of judgment, but ' of that ſpiritual kingdom which was to be erect- ' ed by the Meſſiah; and into which men entered ' by baptiſm; whence it muſt follow, that no ' man is indeed a member of Chriſt's kingdom, ' who is not truly regenerate..... That this ſeems ' to be directed againſt the falſe and pernicious ' conceptions of the *Jewiſh* doctors, the Scribes ' and Phariſees, who thought they had a title to ' the kingdom of God, and the bleſſings of it, ' as being the ſeed of *Abraham* according to the ' fleſh.' .... And on the fifth verſe,

' That our Lord here ſpeaks of baptiſmal re- ' generation, the whole chriſtian church from the ' beginning hath always taught, and that with very ' good reaſon; for, firſt, tho' water is ſometimes ' put to ſignify, or repreſent the purifying opera- ' tion,

[a] Hiſt. 572. Defence, p. 11.

' tions of the holy ſpirit, yet to be born of water
' is a phraſe never uſed in ſcripture, for being
' born of the ſpirit; but very properly is it uſed
' of that baptiſm, which is the laver of regenera-
' tion, *Tit.* iii. 5. and was by all the antients ſtiled,
' παλιγγενεσία, or regeneration. Secondly, ... to
' be baptized with water and the Holy Ghoſt, moſt
' likely ſignifies to be baptized with the Holy
' Ghoſt, and with the ſymbol of water. Thirdly,
' The queſtion betwixt Chriſt and *Nicodemus* was
' about that which was requiſite to fit a man to
' enter into the kingdom, that is, the church of
' God, and make him partaker of the bleſſings of
' the goſpel. Now it is certain that baptiſm by wa-
' ter is, by our Lord, declared to be the ordinary
' means of entering into his kingdom, for he
' ſaith, *Mark* xvi. 16. *He that believeth and is bap-*
' *tized ſhall be ſaved*; . . . . Chriſt therefore here de-
' clares it to be a rite neceſſary for the entrance of
' adult perſons into his kingdom, and it ſeems
' highly reaſonable to eſteem ſo of it; for what
' ſalvation can be expected by them, who, after
' he hath told them they muſt be baptized with
' water, that they may enter into his kingdom,
' do by refuſing that ſacrament too plainly ſhew
' that they refuſe that way of entering into his
' kingdom, and becoming his diſciples, which he
' had appointed for that end?

Dr. *Benſon* alſo, for I am told, he hath had the degree of doctor in divinity conferred upon him by one of the Univerſities in *Scotland* ſince theſe remarks were written, has in his book, intitled, *The Reaſonableneſs of the Chriſtian Religion*, paraphraſed theſe words of Chriſt to *Nicodemus*, *Except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God*, of his ' publicly taking upon him the profeſſion of
' the chriſtian religion, by baptiſm; or elſe he
' could not ſee the kingdom of God, could not
' become a member of Chriſt's church, or king-
' dom;' which he further illuſtrates and confirms

from

from the fifth verſe. And as he there takes it for the true meaning and intention of our Lord, the ſenſe moſt eaſily defended againſt the cavils of an infidel; he cannot, I think, well object againſt the uſe I have made of it, and the inferences drawn from thence in my letter.

Dr. *Benſon* is very juſtly eſteemed by many perſons for his writings, who, no doubt, will think it no ſmall recommendation of my expoſition, that it is approved by him. Therefore, tho' the paſſage is pretty long, yet I will give it my readers; whereby they may alſo ſee, what groundleſs ſuppoſitions, even the doctor himſelf is ready to make from *Nicodemus*'s ignorant anſwer to Chriſt, in order to ſupport a favourite opinion. He ſays, page 247,

'Our Saviour's converſation with *Nicodemus* is 'the moſt juſt and proper, provided we attend to 'his character, and to all the circumſtances. He 'was a Phariſee, and laboured under the com-'mon prejudices of the *Jews*, and as he was a 'ruler among them, and of a timorous temper, 'he came to Jeſus by night; however he owned 'his miracles, and thence inferred his divine miſ-'ſion; moſt probably taking him for the Meſ-'ſiah. "Jeſus let him know that coming to 'him by night was not ſufficient, neither had he, 'as a *Jew*, any right to be a member of the meſ-'ſiah's kingdom, but he muſt, like other proſe-'lytes (in the *Jewiſh* phraſe) be born again, or pub-'licly take upon him the profeſſion of the chriſ-'tian religion, by baptiſm; or elſe he could not 'ſee the kingdom of God, could not become a 'member of Chriſt's church, or kingdom." *Ni-'codemus* thought himſelf already one of the peo-'ple of God, becauſe he was a *Jew*. If our Sa-'viour had told him that an heathen, in order to 'become a proſelyte to the *Jewiſh* religion, muſt 'be born again, by baptiſm and circumciſion, he 'could have readily underſtood him; becauſe

'that

'that was their uſual phraſeology for the initiat-
'ing of heathen proſelytes into the *Jewiſh* religion.
'But that he, a *Jew*, and (as ſuch) already one of
'the people of God, ſhould have occaſion for
'being initiated, like a heathen proſelyte, was
'what he could not underſtand. He therefore,
'could think of no other meaning to Jeſus's
'words, but the literal meaning; and yet was
'ſurprized to hear him talk of being born again,
'in the natural ſenſe.'

All that is here pretended from *Nicodemus*'s anſwer is a mere ſuppoſition, not only without the leaſt evidence from any authentic hiſtory, but alſo quite contrary to reaſon. For, if there had been any ſuch *proſelyte baptiſm amongſt the* Jews, *before and in our Saviour's time*; and which *they were* every *day making uſe of*, as Dr. *Benſon* pretends: no common *Jew*, much leſs *a ruler, and maſter in Iſrael*, could ever have been ſo *ſurpriſed*, and ſo much at a loſs, how to underſtand our Lord; and therefore, muſt have returned a much better anſwer to him. Such, as this, would naturally have occurred to mind. 'I know very well that it is common
'and uſual, even daily, for heathen proſelytes to
'be initiated into our religion by baptiſm and cir-
'cumciſion; but, as we are the people of God,
'circumciſed *Jews* already, can there be any
'reaſon or any occaſion for us to be baptized, as
'well as proſelytes.' This, upon the doctor's ſuppoſition, would have been the moſt ready and the moſt natural reply, when Chriſt told him, he *muſt be born again, or he could not ſee the kingdom of God*: but by the anſwer which *Nicodemus* gave, he appears to be ſo far from knowing any thing at all about *Jewiſh* proſelyte baptiſm; or of having the leaſt notion of any ſuch thing, that the only idea, which he had, of being born again, was entirely confined to that of the natural birth; and it is remarkable alſo, that his anſwer univerſally extends to all men, whether Heathen or *Jews*; for

he ſays, not, how can I, or how can a *Jew*, but, *How can a* MAN *be born when he is old? Can he enter the ſecond time into his mother's womb, and be born?* which therefore is a ſtrong preſumptive proof, that no ſuch *Jewiſh* proſelyte baptiſm was ever heard of by him. It is a thing vaſtly incredible, that a ruler, and maſter in *Iſrael* ſhould be quite ignorant of it, if there then was, or had ever been, any ſuch practice amongſt the *Jews*, and ſo very common, that they *were daily making uſe of it.* This paſſage of ſcripture therefore, and the other ſix, I produced in my ſupplement, afford ſo many convincing arguments againſt this opinion, which has not one text, nor any other good authority to ſupport it, that one would think it ſhould never be admitted by any Chriſtians, who ſeriouſly conſider them.

'But Dr. *Benſon* proceeds: "Jeſus explained 'himſelf, and confirmed what he had ſaid, aſſur-'ing him that unleſs a man (even a *Jew*) were re-'gularly initiated into his church, or born of wa-'ter and of the ſpirit, he could not ſee (or enter 'into) the kingdom of God. And, from the hiſ-'tory of the *Acts* of the apoſtles, and their epiſ-'tles, we accordingly find, that that was the 'way, in which *Jews*, as well as other perſons, 'were initiated into the chriſtian church, being 'firſt baptized with water, and then with the Holy 'Spirit. (See, beſides many other places, *Acts* ii. '38. and viii. 12. *&c.* and xix. 1. *&c.*) Our Saviour 'goes on to ſay, ver. 6. Being born of the fleſh, 'being a *Jew* by birth, did not initiate him into 'the chriſtian church; neither would it have done 'ſo, if it had been ever ſo often repeated. But 'being born of water and of the ſpirit, would 'initiate him into the ſpiritual diſpenſation. *Ni-'codemus*, deeply tinctured with the *Jewiſh* preju-'dices, was very much aſtoniſhed at Jeſus's talk. 'Our Lord obſerved it, and ſaid unto him, Mar-'vel not that I ſaid unto you, that you (*Jews*) 'muſt be born again. And then ver. 8. he at-

'tacks

'tacks another *Jewiſh* prejudice in *Nicodemus*, and 'intimated that the *Gentiles* ſhould be called into 'the kingdom of God, under the Meſſiah, and 'ſhould enjoy equal privileges; the wind bloweth 'were it pleaſeth, and you hear the ſound there-'of, but cannot tell whence it cometh and whi-'ther it goeth; (you cannot tell all the points 'from whence it cometh, nor to how many points 'it ſteereth its courſe; but it appeareth, from the 'ſound, and other effects of it, that it bloweth to 'and from all points of the compaſs) ſo is every 'one that is born of the ſpirit; ſo ſhall men come 'from all parts of the world, from every point 'of the compaſs, and (by being baptized with 'water and with the ſpirit) be initiated as proſe-'lytes to my religion: or (as our Saviour elſewhere 'expreſſed the ſame thing) they ſhall come from 'the eaſt, and from the weſt, from the north, 'and from the ſouth; and ſhall ſit down in the 'kingdom of God. This additional diſcovery 'increaſed *Nicodemus*'s ſurpriſe, and he ſaid unto 'him, how can theſe things be? Jeſus, with the 'greateſt propriety, anſwered, are you a maſter 'in *Iſrael*, and know not theſe things? Can you 'be ignorant of your own phraſes, in which be-'ing born again ſignifies proſelytiſm; and which 'you are every day uſing, concerning heathens 'coming over to your religion? And, why can-'not you underſtand the ſame phraſes, when ap-'plied to *Jews* entering into my church? And, 'can you (a maſter in *Iſrael*) be ignorant of God's 'deſign to accept the *Gentiles*, as his people, under 'the Meſſiah, when, your ancient prophets have, 'in many places and clearly, ſpoken of this re-'markable event? I could eaſily go on to ſhew 'you, how our Saviour attacked ſome other of '*Nicodemus*'s prejudices; intimating that he was to 'be crucified; and that they were wrong in ex-'pecting a temporal triumphant prince, when the

'prophets had foretold a ſpiritual, ſuffering Meſ-
'ſiah; and that the heathen world was not to be
'condemned, but ſaved, by his coming. But
'enough has been ſaid, to ſhew that this text doth
'not prove that for which your author hath al-
'ledged it.'

The doctor might, perhaps, take up this groundleſs opinion of *Jewiſh* proſelyte baptiſm, upon the credit of ſuch Chriſtians, who had before imbibed it from *Jewiſh* fables, without thoroughly examining the foundation, upon which it ſtands, as he might have done. But I have ſhewn in my ſupplement, that there is no clear evidence, nor expreſs mention of ſuch a thing in any of their books, till the *Gemara*, a part of the *Jewiſh* Talmud, not written till five or ſix hundred years after our bleſſed Lord; much too late to be regarded, if the authority of it was not at the loweſt ebb imaginable. For the ſuppoſition grounded upon the miſchna in the third century, which is the firſt pretended proof, may only relate to bathing for purification from the blood of circumciſion, with which, thro' their ſuperſtitious deluſion, they might then pretend the patient was defiled: tho', as it was no natural purgation, but aroſe ſolely from the divine command, it could not be attended with any kind of pollution, or uncleanneſs, to need a purification. And according to the law of *Moſes*, the ſprinkling or ſtriking with blood, was ſo far from polluting, that it was the moſt ſolemn purification; whereby not only the people, but alſo the prieſts, their garments, the ſanctuary, with all the veſſels of the miniſtry, and even the book of the law itſelf, were ſanctified or hallowed, *Exod.* xxiv. 6—8. ch. xix. 20, 21. *Levit.* iv. 6, 17, 18. ch. viii. 15, 30. ch. xvi. 14, 20. ch. xvii. 11. *Heb.* ix. 7, 13, 19—22. And there is no mention in ſcripture, that any kind of pollution attended the blood of circumciſion; or the leaſt, moſt diſtant hint, that any manner of purification by water

was

was neceſſary to prepare the patient for circumciſion, any more than for cleanſing him after it; no account that any ſuch thing was practiſed, when *Abraham*, at the command of God, circumciſed himſelf and all the males of his family, *Gen.* xvii. 23—27; or when he circumciſed his ſon *Iſaac*, the year after, upon the eighth day, *Gen.* xxi. 4. Nor do we read, that the child of *Moſes* was bathed in water, when *Zipporah his wife*, who was no *Jeweſs*, *circumciſed* it *with a ſharp ſtone*, Exod. iv. 25; or thoſe many thouſands of *Iſrael* circumciſed by *Joſhua*, *at the hill of foreſkins*, after their forty years travel in the wilderneſs, *Joſhua* v. 2—9; tho' it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that many of them were polluted by the idolatries, for which ſo many thouſands had been cut off, as well as by their other ſins. Neither was there any thing of this kind appointed by the Lord, when he gave to the *Jews*, by *Moſes* and *Aaron*, the law for circumciſing of proſelytes, and their families, *Exod.* xii. 48; where, if it had been the will of God, it muſt certainly have been expreſsly mentioned. For the precepts of the *Jewiſh* law, concerning their religious rites, are ſo very particular, and exact in every thing, that they are often repeated over and over again, to prevent any miſtake in the one, or any omiſſion in performance of the other. And therefore to be ſure nothing of the divine will ſo very eſſential, as to be made the plan of chriſtian baptiſm afterwards, could ever be wholly omitted by *Moſes*; who, we are aſſured, was a *faithful ſervant*; *and told the children of* Iſrael, *according to all that the Lord commanded* him, *Num.* xxix. 40. *Heb.* iii. 5. ch. viii. 5. And moreover, it is remarkable, that in the command of God for circumciſing proſelytes and their families, it is expreſsly ſaid, that *one law ſhall be to him that is home born, and unto the ſtranger that ſojourneth among you*, Exod. xii. 48, 49. Nor was there any ſuch thing practiſed or required of the *Shechemites*, when they were circumciſed,

ciſed, *Gen.* xxxiv. 24; where, if it had been at all neceſſary for proſelytes, we might reaſonably have expected the mention of it: ſo that our Pædobaptiſt brethren have not the leaſt ſhadow of evidence, either in the Old or New Teſtament, to ſupport this *Jewiſh* fable, on which they build ſo much. But, on the contrary, every thing we meet with there relating either to circumciſion, or baptiſm, is clearly and plainly againſt them; and all the proofs, which they have yet been able to produce for *Jewiſh* proſelyte baptiſm, before and in our Saviour's time, and for ſeveral hundred years afterwards, are no better than Dr. *Benſon*'s ſuppoſition from *Nicodemus*'s anſwer to Chriſt; where the manner of expreſſion, the circumſtances of things, compared with the poſitive and clear expreſſions of the *Jewiſh* Rabbins, in that and ſome following ages, are a ſufficient and evident proof of the direct contrary: that they never had any ſuch initiatory baptiſm, as is pretended, amongſt them, and therefore if the doctor had ever thoroughly ſearched into theſe things, it may be preſumed, that he would never have endeavoured to propagate, amongſt his readers, the belief of *Jewiſh* proſelyte baptiſm, before and in our Saviour's time. But I have given a more full and particular account of this *Jewiſh* fable, in my ſupplement, and in my anſwer to Mr. *Emlyn*'s previous queſtion, from the writings of the learned Dr. *Gale*, who was as able to ſearch into, as careful to find out the truth, and to know the foundation of this groundleſs conceit as any man, and whoſe teſtimonies and arguments upon that head were never yet confuted. To them I refer my readers, and ſhall only add here, that for any thing, which has ever yet appeared, notwithſtanding all the labour and pains taken by our Pædobaptiſt brethren to eſtabliſh this notion of *Jewiſh* proſelyte baptiſm, it ſtands upon the bare authority of talmudical books, not compoſed till ſeveral hundred years after Chriſt, and

ſtuffed

ſtuffed with blaſphemies, full of ſtupid infatuation, and wild romance; and upon whoſe credit, if it was not invalidated by what has been already *publiſhed*, no man, who wiſhes not to be impoſed upon, would ever rely. And are theſe principles, from which to deduce duties of religion; on which to found poſitive inſtitutions of God? If *Jewiſh* legends are to be the ground work of chriſtian duties, the whole face of the goſpel may in time be ſo mangled, and diſfigured, as to bare nothing at all of the aſpect of primitive, and unadulterate Chriſtianity.'

All that is between the hooks from [How Chriſtians can think p. 103. to, it is remarkable that] p 104. And alſo from [Moreover all ſuch perſons, p. 106 to, divine diſpleaſure] p. 108 was not in the original letters. The paſſages from the apoſtolical conſtitutions, and Juſtin Martyr, inſerted in the latter addition, witneſs to the truth and juſtneſs of my own reaſoning; whereby the reader may ſee, I have the beſt antiquity on my ſide, a thing not to be deſpiſed by any wiſe or conſiderate man, when correſponding with the ſcriptures themſelves.

I have alſo added the word viſible in ſome places, and an expreſſion, or two beſides, more clearly to determine my ſenſe, and prevent any miſconſtruction of my words. And if any reader ſhould think my arguments in ſome places bare too hard upon ſuch communicants, as are unbaptized; or on thoſe, who communicate with others, whom they know and believe to be ſo; or upon any other denomination of Chriſtians, who are not of the Baptiſt perſuaſion; I hope his candour will acquit me of uncharitableneſs, when he conſiders my caution, in reſtraining my arguments to the ſtate of the chriſtian church here on earth. And I am perſuaded my charity is as great for thoſe, who differ in opinion from me, as any Chriſtian's is, or ought to be; tho' I cannot be ſo complaiſant to any, as to give up the intereſt of truth; and countenance them in a corruption, or neglect of any one of my Lord's commands or inſtitutions. And I doubt not, but they would readily acknowledge this; if I ſhould ever publiſh, what I wrote many years ago, upon the unlawfulneſs of impoſing human articles, creeds, or explanations of ſcripture, or of ſeparation for mere difference in opinion; and therefore all I have here ſaid ought wholly to be imputed to a laudable zeal in me for the cauſe of truth; which God grant I may never be aſhamed or afraid to appear in, according to my ability. And if I am but ſo happy, as to be any ways ſerviceable thereto; and at the ſame time retain the favourable ſentiments of my readers, agreeable to what I beſpoke, in my firſt letter, of the reverend miniſter, at whoſe requeſt it was written, it is all I deſire.

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ERRATA.

PAGE 23, line 28, for *them any*, read, *the many*; p. 86, l. 10, read, *religion*; *that*; p. 88, l. 13, read *endued*; p. 111, l. 30, for *there*, read, *their*.

REMARKS

On the Several

ANSWERS

To the Pamphlet, intitled

Chriſtianity not founded on Argument.

INTRODUCTION.

THE poſitive duties of our holy religion are equally ſacred, and demand from us, if we are from conviction Chriſtians, and, in decency of character, if we are only nominal, nay, if we are hypocritical, and merely mercenary Chriſtians, the ſame outward regard and ſtrict obſervation, as thoſe which are moral and unchangeable. Tho' they are not of the ſame importance and intrinſic dignity, they are, and muſt be, equally inviolable, becauſe there is but one enacting au-

thority with reſpect to the laws both of nature and revelation: and tho' the former may be received as fit rules of conduct, they can never be obeyed as laws of government, but upon the very ſame foundation and ground of authority. For nature cannot be ſuperior to God, becauſe it is the conſtitution and creature of God; it can therefore have no pretence to controul his will ſupernaturally revealed: for in both caſes the wiſdom is the ſame, and the right of governing the ſame. A Chriſtian therefore muſt yield exact obedience to the poſitive inſtitutions of the chriſtian doctrine on the ſelf-ſame principle, on which he thinks it his duty to conform from motives of religion, or acknowledgment and ſuitable veneration of the ſupreme Deity, to the eternal and univerſal rules of virtue and morality.

When therefore any of us, acknowledging the authority of Chriſt, and the divinity and truth of his religion, live in the omiſſion of any poſitive duty, which he, in the name of God, and as inveſted with his ſupreme authority, has enjoined upon us, we act in ſuch a manner, as is not only abſolutely inconſiſtent with the character we aſſume, and ſhould think it our honour to bear, of being his diſciples, but in a way that is a contradiction to itſelf, and to all the natural principles of reaſon. For there is no one clearer and more certain principle of everlaſting and unalterable right within the whole extent and ſcope of moral duty, than this, that the omnipotent creator and ſovereign ruler, whoſe dominion is unlimited, and who is perfect in wiſdom, and in all moral excellence, ſhould be reverenced, honoured, and obeyed in all his laws, in all the diſcoveries and declarations of his will, whether by the voice of nature, or by extraordinary methods of revelation. And in no one point can there be the leaſt juſt ground to object, without ſuppoſing that he is a capricious, arbitrary, tyrannical being, who is not in the abſtract propriety and truth of things fit to be obeyed, nor, conſequently, without entirely diſſolving, together with every inſtituted tie, the religion of nature and reaſon itſelf. Nor ought the baſe and ſlaviſh principle of public ſhame, or a ſordid ſecular intereſt, to have any influence in an affair of ſuch vaſt importance, as that of preſerving an uncorrupted probity of mind, and approving our fidelity to God. They ſhould neither ſuſpend, nor controul and limit, the free ſcope of our enquiries, nor prevent our renouncing error, however popular and long eſtabliſh-

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ed, upon a full conviction of the underſtanding, and making a public profeſſion of the truth, however deſpiſed and loaded with reproach and ignominy. Such an ingenuous and open conduct has ſomething ſo great, ſo praiſeworthy and generous in it, that almoſt all will find themſelves conſtrained by nature, and the univerſal ingrafted ſentiment of what is right and excellent, to approve, what but few have the piety and reſolution to imitate.

The ordinance of baptiſm is a duty entirely chriſtian, and a matter of mere inſtituted ſervice, ordained indeed not wantonly, for the diſplay of power, and the prerogatives of ſovereign rule, but wiſely calculated to ſubſerve the great purpoſes of virtue, and the ultimate end of all true religion. And as the obligation of it reſults wholly from the will of God the ſupreme lawgiver, the original plan of inſtitution ought, in every circumſtance, to be ſtrictly obſerved, and inflexibly adhered to. To annul, is to degrade and oppoſe the authority of God: to alter, is, ſo far as the alteration extends, the ſame as to annul. Circumſtances may poſſibly happen here, as in the caſe of all other poſitive ſervices, that will excuſe, for a time at leaſt, from the actual performance of this duty; but no ſituation, no plea of inconvenience, can juſtify our introducing and ſubſtituting a human ordinance in the place of a divine. But whenever ſuch changes are attempted and complied with, the act immediately loſes the nature of piety, and is converted into groſs ſuperſtition. The piety is evacuated by departing from the command of God, which alone can conſtitute a religious obligation; and the ſuperſtition plainly appears, in that it is a ſervice contrived and dictated by the blind conceit, folly, and arrogance of man, which is the general eſſential nature, and the proper character of all ſuperſtition. Let Chriſtians therefore proceed calmly, diſcarding and utterly renouncing all prejudices, whether of education, cuſtom, or intereſt; let them with candour and ſimplicity of mind, conſider the account, which the new Teſtament gives of the ordinance of baptiſm, in which alone the primitive law, preſcribing the practice of it, is authoritatively recorded; and upon which our judgment concerning it, if we are reaſonable Chriſtians or conſiſtent Proteſtants, muſt be abſolutely and wholly formed.

Had theſe ſentiments always poſſeſſed the minds of Chriſtians, thoſe diviſions and contentions, which have ſo long diſturbed, diſtracted and rent the church

of Chriſt, had been prevented. And it is by ſuch a conduct, and by that alone, that an happy end muſt be put to them; for hereby we ſhould ſoon become one flock, and one fold, under *Chriſt Jeſus the great ſhepherd and biſhop of our ſouls*, 1 *Pet.* ii. 25. This indeed is what the ignorant zealot, the mad and wild enthuſiaſt have had in view: for the accompliſhing of this, the moſt wicked and injurious proceedings have been begun and carried on by them, with the utmoſt rage and fury, againſt the moſt ſincere, pious and conſcientious Chriſtians; for no other reaſon in the world, but becauſe they differed from them in the practice of ſome religious duties, or could not aſſent to ſuch perplexed propoſitions, as they were pleaſed to impoſe as the orthodox faith. Fire and faggot, with all manner of cruelty and bloodſhed, have been the helliſh means made uſe of by ſome to convince men of what thoſe tyrants and murderers were pleaſed to call the true chriſtian faith; whilſt fines and impriſonment, and all kinds of oppreſſion, have been the tender mercies of others, and the method they perſued for informing the underſtanding, and eſtabliſhing uniformity in faith and worſhip. [1] "Many "and juſt [ſays the *Cambridge* Gentleman, tho' he pleads "for the magiſtrate's power in favour of truth] have been "the complaints againſt this method and manner of pro"ceeding. Meek, mild and merciful, was the behavi"our of the great author of our religion; and of the "ſame nature, all his precepts and directions. But ſevere "and inhuman have many laws been, and they have been "executed with unrelenting rigour, as neceſſary ſupports "to Chriſtianity. Such have been the meaſures not only "againſt it's profeſſed enemies, but againſt Chriſtians of "different diſtinctions and denominations. Barbarities, "equally horrible with thoſe which have raged among "the moſt barbarous nations, have by this means been "committed in the chriſtian world." But how far ſhort all ſuch meaſures are ever likely to be of producing this deſirable end, the event hath ſufficiently and fully proved. For which reaſon ſome miniſters in our time, who are for promoting the ſame thing, tho' in a very different way, think that there may be, and accordingly recommend, ſuch a general union, that all Chriſtians, under every denomination, may communicate together at the Lord's table, notwithſtanding their various conceptions concerning the doctrines of Chriſtianity, and the different manner

[1] *Cambridge Letter*, p. 25, 26.

manner in which ſome pretend to adminiſter baptiſm, as the ordinance of Chriſt. Indeed, if our differences ſubſiſted only in the mind, then every one might poſſeſs his ſpeculative truth entire, notwithſtanding his brother's miſtakes. For it is very common now in moſt aſſemblies, for Chriſtians, who ſtrictly believe in the divine unity, to communicate with thoſe, who profeſs the Athanaſian doctrine, with the ſame ſincere piety in each, as if they were all of one mind in that controverſy. And even at the Lord's table, I might receive the divine memorials of my Saviour's paſſion, with all the devotion and reverence, and with that juſt and rational idea of mind, which the ſcripture gives of it; whilſt my brother and fellow Chriſtian, who ſat next me, might alſo receive it in remembrance of Chriſt; and yet, from a notion form'd in his mind, upon the letter of the word, and the wild dictates of others, be led to adore it as his God, and verily believe in his heart, that the elements of bread and wine, after conſecration, were really tranſubſtantiated into the body and blood of our Redeemer; and this without diſturbing, or in the leaſt diſcompoſing each other in our devotions. Nor are there any points of doctrine, or articles of the chriſtian faith, in which the conceptions and opinions of Chriſtians can poſſibly differ more widely from each other, than they do in theſe, and therefore the like forbearance or allowance ought to be made for the weakneſs of my erring brother, with reſpect to them alſo: whereby the rights of private judgment will be inviolably maintained, agreeable to what the apoſtle ſaith; *Haſt thou faith? Have it to thyſelf before God*, Rom. xiv. 22. And, *Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful diſputations*, ver. 1.

But on the other hand, where our differences conſiſt not merely in ſpeculation, or the bare aſſent of our minds to any ſcripture truth; but alſo in matters of practice, or the manner, in which religious duties are to be performed, as the ordinances of God, and as the appointments of Chriſt himſelf, there our different and contrary proceedings muſt neceſſarily create confuſion and diſorder. Beſides, it would be moſt unreaſonable to expect, that any man ſhould openly countenance, and give public ſanction to the performance of any act in the name of the Lord; which his conſcience aſſures him is no other than a mere human appointment, or ſuperſtitious inſtitution, whereby that of Chriſt is entirely ſubverted, and made

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of no effect. In this caſe therefore every conſcientious Chriſtian muſt be ſo far from openly countenancing, or giving public ſanction to ſuch actions, or proceedings, that, on the contrary, his duty to God, and his allegiance to Chriſt, oblige him to bear a faithful teſtimony againſt all ſuch corruptions, in order to maintain and uphold the authority of Chriſt, the honour and dignity of his laws, the reſtoration and eſtabliſhment of the purity and truth of his inſtitutions; and, as far as in him lies, the reformation of his brother from the error of his ways. And we are the more obliged to this, with reſpect to baptiſm, in that our Pædobaptiſt brethren cannot but juſtify us in our adminiſtration of that ſacred ordinance, by acknowledging it was the primitive practice, the way by which believers were initiated in the apoſtles days; and as they cannot produce any divine authority for the alterations by them introduced, their own practice is at beſt no other than a church, I had like to have ſaid Popiſh, tradition. And therefore, as I have ſhewn at large in my ſupplement, it is not we, but they themſelves, who make the ſeparation. They force us from them, and it is at their door only, that the ſin of ſchiſm muſt lie; becauſe two things Chriſt himſelf has made eſſential to the conſtitution of, and gathering of members into his, church. One is a firm belief of this great foundation article of the chriſtian faith, that he is *Chriſt the Son of the living God*; for *upon this rock*, ſays he, *I will build my church: and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it*, Matt. xvi. 16. On which ſee my ſupplement, p. 12. The other is, that ſuch believers *be born of water and of the ſpirit*, without which, he aſſures us, *no man can ſee, or enter into, the kingdom of God*; on which ſee my firſt letter, and alſo Dr. *Whitby* and Mr. *Benſon*, as quoted in my preface.

Theſe therefore ought to be ſtrictly obſerved, and punctually complied with by every Chriſtian; and muſt alſo be inflexibly adhered to, and inviolably maintained by the chriſtian church: which therefore ſhe ought not to diſpenſe with, ſo far as to admit perſons to the rights and privileges thereof, who do not profeſs to believe the one, and have not manifeſted that faith in Chriſt, with their reſolution of obedience to him, by ſubmitting to the other; becauſe all ſuch perſons are hereby ſtrictly excepted or prohibited by Chriſt himſelf. For a ſociety of Chriſtians therefore to receive unbaptized perſons into their communion, would be to countenance their unbelief and diſobedience,

dience, and with reſpect to themſelves, may be eſteemed a deſpiſing the authority of Chriſt, a betraying, or giving up his inſtitution, and a caſting off their allegiance to him. And in the event, it would be ſo far from preventing reflections, and hindering deiſts from attacking chriſtianity, that by our thus ſapping one or two of the *foundation principles of the doctrine of Chriſt*, Heb. vi. 1, 2. and of our own ſelves taking away the fences, and deſtroying the very boundary which Chriſt himſelf has made, which I apprehend would be the conſequence of ſuch an unnatural or unjuſtifiable union, we ſhould thereby give infidels a much greater advantage againſt us, and our holy religion, than they can poſſibly have from the continuance of our diſtinct and ſeparate communions.

For when deiſts obſerve, that Chriſtians themſelves make ſo very little account of Chriſt's moſt ſolemn inſtitutions, or of the right adminiſtration of them, they may thence infer, and be led to think themſelves fully juſtified in rejecting, or ſhewing as light an eſteem for his doctrines; ſince if he was divinely inſpired, and really came from God, all that he delivered, muſt be equally obſerved by his profeſſed diſciples and followers, who, as ſuch, can never be abſolved from a moſt ſtrict and careful regard, and obedience to the whole of his inſtitutions. Nor is it their duty to have this regard to Chriſt's inſtitutions themſelves only, but alſo to promote the ſame in others ſo far as they are able; which thoſe Chriſtians are very far from doing, who pretend that *profeſſors of all denominations*, nay, that *perſons unbaptized, may all communicate, or eat bread, and drink wine together at the Lord's table in remembrance of Chriſt:* which opinion, big with many evils, is neither founded on the word of God, nor the practice of the church in any age; nor yet upon the reaſon and nature of things, but only upon mere complaiſance, under the falſe notion of manifeſting their charity to other Chriſtians. But ſurely our love and regard are due to Chriſt, to his inſtitutions and laws, more than to any man, or body of men whatſoever; and therefore it muſt be very unjuſtifiable in us, to give up the former, for the ſake of the latter, becauſe, *he that loveth father, or mother, wife, or children, brethren, or ſiſters, or any thing, even his own life, more than* Chriſt and his ways, *is not worthy of* him. Math. x. 32—39. Luke xiv. 25—31. For as Mr. *Benſon* obſerves,

[2] ‘ Mr. *Locke*, in his excellent treatiſe, of the reaſonableneſs of the chriſtian religion, *&c.*——has ſhewn ‘ that . . . . “ the one ſingle propoſition, which Chriſt “ and his Apoſtles made eſſential to being a Chriſtian, is, “ that Jeſus is the Chriſt, otherwiſe called the Meſſiah, “ the Son of God, or Saviour of men. Whoever, upon “ attending to the evidence, was convinced of this truth, “ acknowledged the belief of it, and took upon him the “ profeſſion of this faith by baptiſm, was ſuppoſed ſufficiently to have acknowledged Chriſt's authority, and “ thereupon to be intitled to communion with any “ church, or Chriſtian, upon the face of the earth. He “ had a title to all the privileges of being within the pale, “ and was looked upon as one that belonged to that one “ flock and one fold, which are united under Chriſt Jeſus their common head and Lord.” And then he adds ſtill further;

[3] ‘ But it is fundamental to the ſalvation of every man, ‘ that he be a ſincere, honeſt, upright man, and that he ‘ inquire, and readily receive whatever he finds to be ‘ true, whether by reaſon or revelation. In acknowledging Jeſus to be the Chriſt, he in effect takes him for ‘ Head and Lord, and thereby lays himſelf under obligation to receive whatever truths he can find that Chriſt ‘ has any way revealed, as well as to practiſe every duty ‘ which he has injoined. And it would be ſo far renouncing his allegiance to Chriſt, and diſowning his divine ‘ miſſion and authority, to reject any doctrine or precept, ‘ that is ſtamped with Chriſt's authority. For that would, ‘ in all juſt conſtruction, be to deny him to be the Chriſt, ‘ or a prophet and teacher ſent from God.’

This is very juſtly expreſſed, and I heartily wiſh Mr. *Benſon*, and all his Pædobaptiſt brethren, would for their own ſakes uniformly act according to this ſentiment of his, that we might no longer have occaſion to retort their own words upon them, as a juſt rebuke for their not ſhewing that ſame regard and readineſs to obey Chriſt's authority in the great duty of baptiſm, which they ſo forcibly preſs upon their hearers and readers upon many other occaſions: and which they can ſcarcely avoid giving room for, in almoſt every ſermon they preach, and every book they

[2] *Mr.* Benſon's *Reaſonableneſs of the Chriſtian Religion*, p. 84. [3] ibid. p. 85.

they publiſh, either in defence of Chriſtianity in general, or the ſeveral doctrines thereof in particular, againſt the various abuſes and corruptions of them. And can they ever think, how juſtly their own arguments may be turned againſt them, and then ſeriouſly conſider, *Rom.* ii. 1, 2, 3, 11, 17,—21. *Matt.* xv. 3, 6, 9. and *Mark* vii. 7, 8, 9, 13. without ſecretly wiſhing, with ſome concern, that we had no room, nor any occaſion given for it. For are they not in this particular the very perſons Mr. *Benſon* ſpeaks of? [4] 'Who, 'overlooking the evidences already 'afforded, are always cavilling and demanding new, or 'other ſort of evidence: they catch at every ſpecious ap-'pearance of an argument, or objection, to make them-'ſelves eaſy in rejecting truths of ſuch importance; but 'are afraid of examining things to the bottom, leſt they 'ſhould be thereby condemned. Such are the reaſons, 'which our Saviour has aſſigned, of mens want of faith 'in him and his goſpel.' Or, [5] *As the* Oxford *young Gentleman expreſſes himſelf*, 'Can you not diſcern a mani-'feſt difference between the behaviour of one ſon who ac-'cepts, and readily executes his father's commands, con-'veyed to him by the inſtruments uſual in ſuch caſes, 'and from which he can have no more than a moral cer-'tainty; and another who would believe neither his ſer-'vant, nor his own hand-writing, unleſs he came to him 'himſelf in perſon to acquaint him with his will and plea-'ſure. The difference is viſible; and the reaſon of it is this. 'One caſe ſhews a will to obey; the other, a diſpoſition 'to catch hold of every handle to excuſe himſelf; which 'is the true eſſential diſtinction between a moral and an 'immoral man.' And as Dr. *Doddridge* obſerves, [6] 'There 'might indeed be a third ſort of perſons, whoſe ſtate was 'a medium between that of theſe, and of the ſcorners 'we mentioned before: I mean, ſuch as were indolent 'about the matter; neither poſitively perſuaded that 'Chriſtianity' [*and if applied to many Chriſtians; that adult baptiſm*] 'was falſe, nor quite convinced that it 'was true, nor ſolicitous to bring their doubts to an iſ-'ſue; but concluding, that whether it were true or falſe, 'they might find out a path to happineſs without it. This 'was probably the caſe of many [*formerly*], as it undoubt-'edly is the caſe of many in our days. Now ſuch as theſe 'were not to be looked upon as fair enquirers, but as

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[4] Mr. *Benſon*'s Reaſonableneſs, *&c.* p. 9. [5] page 60.
[6] Second Letter, p. 19, 20

' triflers in the moſt ſerious of all affairs; and as acting ' the moſt abſurd and inconſiſtent part: for as Chriſtia- ' nity pretended to be a matter of the utmoſt importance,' [*and promiſes the pardon of ſin, with the gift of the Holy Ghoſt, to the adult ſubjects of baptiſm.* Mark xvi. 16. Acts ii. 38. and xxii 16] ' in neglecting it they acted as if it ' were aſſuredly falſe, while yet they confeſſed they knew ' not but it might be true. A conduct, which was ren- ' dered eſpecially inexcuſable by that grand apparatus, ' with which providence interpoſed to introduce it, which ' if it proved any thing at all concerning it, muſt prove ' it to be of infinite moment.'

For, ' It is not reaſonable, *ſays Mr. Mole*, [7] to think, ' that God will oblige any man to be reſolved, when he ' knows him to be deſtitute of the neceſſary means; but ' if a man provided with thoſe means, which an honeſt ' uſe of is ſufficient to bring him to a clear determination, ' and he ſhall poſtpone all examination in a caſe, where ' the importance of the matter is inviting, and the autho- ' rity requiring it is competent; and go on fluctuating in ' doubt all his days: what reaſon can we have to think ' hardly of God, if condemnation be the conſequence of ' ſuch a conduct, and the man was before informed of it ' as a motive of diſſuaſion'?

And in this view therefore, his deſcription of the na- ture of true faith is worthy to be here introduced. ' Having conſidered, ſays he, [8] the cauſes, I proceed to ' conſider the nature of faith. And by faith I mean ſuch ' a belief of the miſſion and doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, as ' ſtands connected in a way of moral operation, with ' the exerciſe of repentance, and the ſubſequent practice ' of ſincere virtue; and leads into a compliance with ' every qualification, which Chriſt required for remiſſion ' and ſalvation.' [*Mark* xvi. 16. *Acts* ii. 38. and ch. ix. 17—20 *compared with* ch. xxii. 14—16.] ' Repentance ' and virtue [*or obedience*] were the great leſſons, which he ' was ſent to be a teacher of, and which faith was requir- ' ed as preparatory to their learning; and for this reaſon, ' that it was, and ſo far forth as it was, the moral cauſe ' or inſtrument of leading men to the practice of thoſe ' duties, was it in God's appointment made the condition ' of his beſtowing the bleſſings of remiſſion and ſalvation ' on them. A faith, which is no way connected with ' theſe

[7] *Grounds of the Chriſtian Faith rational*, p. 73.
[8] Ibid. p. 15, 16.

'these things,' [viz. *Such a faith as Infants are ſuppoſed to derive from their parents, or to have in their ſponſors; or that federal holineſs which many of our Pædobaptiſts think neceſſary for their being ſprinkled.*] 'When the uſe and excellence of that, which is required, conſiſts in its being a mean of them, it can be of no ſervice to any to have, or detriment to be without, and is not indeed worth diſputing about;' [*and therefore I hope Infant-ſprinkling, falſly called baptiſm, will no longer be contended for by them.*] 'But true faith is that principle, in virtue of which men enter into the practice of every moral duty, and into a right of inheritance to eternal felicity.' [*See ſupplement*, p. 67, 68.] 'That faith ſtands thus connected, with virtue [*or obedience*] appears from almoſt every thing, that is ſaid of it in the ſcriptures. It is ſometimes called the holy faith, *Jude* xx. At other times we read of the obedience, and righteouſneſs of faith; *Rom.* xvi. 26. and ch. iv. 13. and alſo of faith being reckoned for righteouſneſs, *Rom.* iv. 5. And that it bares this relation to eternal life, our Saviour declares: *John* vi. 47. iii. 36. *Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, he, who believeth in me, hath everlaſting life.*'

I will leave this ſubject to my readers moſt ſerious conſideration in the very words, with which Mr. *Benſon* concludes his foregoing paſſage. [9] 'Leſs evidence would do, in many caſes, if truth was more grateful. But, when men diſlike the things to be proved, they are very unwilling to attend to, or allow the force of thoſe arguments which are to convince them. It is evident mens wills, appetites, paſſions and inclinations, have great influence upon their faith. However, men ought to remember that things are obſtinate, and will not alter with their wiſhes. And every wiſe man ſees that the right way is cooly and carefully to conſider what is propoſed, however it may affect him; and to receive the truth according to the importance and evidence of it. Theſe are the things, which are previous to the aſſent of the mind, and are included in the ſcriptural notion of faith.'

My own ſhort notes or explanations, in two of theſe paſſages, are diſtinguiſhed by Italic, placed in hooks [. . .]. And as ſeveral other quotations from theſe anſwers may have occaſion for ſome ſuch ſhort additions, or amendments; ſo by the like marks, without any other notice,

[9] Page 10.

my readers may know, when I have added to, or altered any words in them. But to return:

This opinion, that perſons unbaptized may be admitted to chriſtian communion, appears to me quite contrary to the nature of the Chriſtian inſtitution, which was to gather a church *out of the world*, John xv. 9, and to all the rules of ſociety, as well as the known practice of the primitive church, in the pureſt ages of it; and would of courſe be deſtructive of all diſcipline, an inlet to diſorder and confuſion, and ſome encouragement to licentiouſneſs.

And herein I think Mr. *Benſon* fully agrees with me, for he muſt believe in the perpetuity of baptiſm, and that it was deſigned for every Chriſtian, in order to his becoming a member of Chriſt's viſible church; or I know not what he can mean, where he ſays, [1] 'But, beſides the moral duties, which are of eternal, unchangeable obligation, the poſitive ordinances of the chriſtian religion were inſtituted as means and aſſiſtances to preſerve men ſtedfaſt in the practice of thoſe moral duties, which are unqueſtionably the weightier matters of the Law; and, even theſe poſitive inſtitutions are ſo free from all appearance of ſuperſtition and vanity, and ſo wiſely fitted to the end for which they were deſigned, that no man can juſtly, or with any reaſon, object againſt the things themſelves, tho' AGAINST THE CORRUPTIONS AND ABUSES OF THEM THERE HAS BEEN ABUNDANT REASON TO OBJECT. For what conſiderate and thinking man can pretend to ſay, that it is any way unreaſonable or ſuperſtitious, for every member of any particular ſociety, to be ſolemnly admitted into that ſociety, by a plain and ſignificant rite, intitling him to all the privileges, and charging him with all the obligations, which belong to the members of that ſociety, as ſuch; which is the deſign of one of the chriſtian ſacraments? Or that it is unreaſonable and ſuperſtitious, frequently and with thankfulneſs to commemorate the love of their greateſt benefactor, who condeſcended even to lay down his life for them; and thereupon humbly and ſolemnly to renew their obligations to him; which is the deſign of the other.'

I have formerly ſhewn in my ſupplement, p. 67, 68, what the true nature, uſe and deſign of baptiſm is; and having therein ſet forth the advantages, which Pædobaptiſt Proteſtants give the Papiſts, by departing from the ſcripture

[1] Ibid. p. 25, 26.

ſcripture rule, and complying with their tradition, in ſprinkling infants, I then added, "May it not be juſtly feared, that deiſts obſerving men, who profeſs a ſacred regard to the ſcriptures, and yet nevertheleſs contradicting them in ſo plain a caſe as the poſitive inſtitution of baptiſm, may thereby be tempted to think ſuch men only pretend to believe the ſcriptures, but in their hearts do not believe them? Or if they do in reality believe them to be of divine authority, and yet deviate from one of the plaineſt precepts thereof, it is not to be ſuppoſed that thoſe, who are in doubt of that authority, can ever be prevailed upon by ſuch perſons to receive and acknowledge them as a guide to eternal happineſs; but, on the contrary, may by this means be confirmed in their infidelity. Proteſtants therefore ſhould well conſider, that by their practice of infant-ſprinkling they weaken the force of all their arguments againſt deiſm." And I now find my apprehenſions were but too juſt. For, they are ſo ſtrongly puſhed upon this point by a late writer, not only ſuſpected of deiſm, but publicly charged with being an *Infidel*, [2] *the moſt wily enemy of the Chriſtian religion*, that the members of our two Univerſities, thoſe renowned ſeminaries of literature, and ſome eminent miniſters amongſt the diſſenting Pædobaptiſts, in their ſeveral defences of Chriſtianity againſt what he advanced, have all in effect been compelled to give up infant-baptiſm, if indeed they have any ſuch thing amongſt them, aſſerting unanimouſly as follows: [3] That it is no where *expreſsly revealed in the New Teſtament, the forms and modes of worſhip, the manner of adminiſtring the ſacraments, the definitions and decrees relating to doctrines, as far as they are human appointments, do not belong to our conſideration, with original Chriſtianity only is our preſent concern.* [4] *The reaſon of the infants themſelves is no way concerned in it. They have no reaſon, nor are they therefore capable of religion.* [5] An *abſurdity* which *the chriſtian religion, or the rational believers of it, have* nothing *further to do with .... than to diſown and diſavow, as ..... a heap of abſurdities, gathered ..... from ſome modern formulas of religious doctrines, or the modern practice of ſome religious ſocieties, which are for the moſt part full of them, and falſly charged upon Chriſtianity.*

[2] Mr. *Moles's Grounds*, &c. p. 54. [3] *Cambridge Letter*, p. 5. [4] *Oxford Reply*, p. 7. [5] Mr. *Moles's Grounds*, p. 56.

anity. [6] *But I am very confident, the ſcripture,* by which *the merits of this cauſe are to be tried, teaches nothing of this kind. Nor from any thing* we *could have met with there, could* we *ever have thought of it.* [7] *But as to thoſe who hold ſuch opinions, and make uſe of ſuch forms, let them anſwer for them. Such things do not appear to me to be according to the pleaſure and ordinance of God himſelf in this point. . . . The New Teſtament itſelf is a ſtranger to any ſuch ſentiments, or practices; and therefore Chriſtianity is not, in the leaſt, affected by this objection.* Theſe are ſome of their own expreſſions concerning infant-baptiſm, in anſwer to what this *wily Infidel* ſaid upon the ſubject; whoſe words Mr. *Benſon in his Dialogue* has thus introduced, p. 94.

'But there is an objection, p. 9. which is repeated, p. 69. and which it will require all your ſkill to reſolve,' *viz.* "Can a man be baptized into a rational religion? "Or, where is reaſon concerned, when babes accept "the terms of ſalvation by deputy, and are intitled to "all the privileges of the moſt extenſive faith by ano"ther's act? By the baptiſmal ceremony, they com"mence true believers at once, and are made heirs of "heaven, by the faith of their bondſmen, while as yet "they have not the leaſt ſhare or ſymptom of underſtand"ing themſelves; and, they cannot well give a rational "aſſent by proxy. Yet ſuch is the pleaſure and ordinance "of God himſelf in this point. And p. 69. he inquires, "can any thing be more natural, upon hearing of a ra"tional faith, than to interrogate, with the greateſt ſim"plicity, after our church-catechiſm; why, then, are "infants baptized; when by reaſon of their tender age, "they cannot poſſibly pretend to know any thing of the "matter? For they article without knowing it, to be"lieve they know not what: and this act, which is pro"perly no act at all, is received as ſomething to all in"tents and purpoſes compleat in itſelf, and compriſing the "whole ſum and extent of a juſt perſuaſion. Their "living longer, to be capable to be informed what it is "they have promiſed to believe, may poſſibly endanger, "but cannot add to, the terms of their contracted happi"neſs. The merits of the moſt finiſhed conviction are "already theirs by imputation. Their claim to heaven "ſtands

[6] *Dr.* Doddridge's *Third Letter*, p. 55, 57. [7] *Mr.* Benſon's *Dialogue*, p. 96, 97.

" ſtands already allowed. And millions are accordingly, " we know, actually ſaved upon the ſtrength of the " mere ceremony, without ever having had the capacity " of exerting one ſingle thought upon that, or any other " ſubject. So far are they all the while of knowing any " thing why, that they do not ſo much as know what " they believe; or indeed, that they do believe any thing " at all." 'Now, is not this a moſt formidable argument 'againſt a rational faith; in as much as they have allowed 'it impoſſible to believe without ideas, or underſtanding; 'and conſequently impoſſible to give a rational aſſent by 'proxy.'

This objection is not formed againſt the private opinions and practice of particular Chriſtians only, but againſt the judgment and eſtabliſhed ordinances of ſeveral Churches; whoſe moſt learned divines profeſs to believe and practiſe infant-baptiſm, as a right appointed for admitting children members of the church of Chriſt; and theſe children, when they are grown up, are many of them taught to believe, that they were thereby *made members of Chriſt, the children of God*, and *inheritors of the kingdom of heaven*. This ceremony, as it has been ſo eagerly and ſo zealouſly contended for, by almoſt the whole chriſtian world for ſeveral ages, ſo from hence alone our modern Infidels, who are not over careful in their examinations of ſcripture, to diſtinguiſh and find out, which opinions and practices amongſt Chriſtians are really taught there, and which only pretended to be ſo, may be willing to believe and take for granted, that theſe things are indeed what Chriſt himſelf taught, and what the ſcriptures ſet forth, as many weak Chriſtians do to this day. And from thence apprehending a conſiderable advantage given them againſt Chriſtianity, they have here laid faſt hold of it. And therefore I hope thoſe Chriſtians, who give them ſuch a handle againſt themſelves, will now conſider it, and act ſuitably to what the nature of this attack requires and demands from them. For as Mr. *Benſon* obſerves,

[8] 'Such repeated attacks upon rational Chriſtianity 'muſt of courſe lead rational believers to a more careful 'and exact inquiry into the nature and evidences of their 'faith; which cannot fail of ending to the advantage of 'truth and virtue. It is poſſible that, upon examination, 'it may be found that Chriſtians have mixed ſome of their 'own private ſentiments with the pure doctrine of Chriſt. 'And,

[8] *Preface to his Dialogue*, p. 5.

'And, as such things cannot be defended, they had much 'better part with them, [*and infant-baptism in particular, 'as his answer to this objection shews*] than give up rati- 'onal Christianity, or load it with those difficulties, which 'afford the most plausible objections against it; tho' in 'reality they do not belong to it. Such authors as this '(whatever be their design) will, perhaps in the issue, 'help us to get rid of such difficulties and incumbrances, 'which is, doubtless, a very desirable thing.'

Besides, as Mr. *Mole* very justly observes, when treating of Christian education; [9] 'Reviewing the grounds of 'our knowledge and conduct, so far from misbecoming 'us, will be what we shall be disposed to by such an edu- 'cation, and what we are not only allowed at any one 'particular time, but obliged to do often, over and over 'again, as long as we live. How far imposture and hu- 'man imposition might suffer by their votaries taking 'such a liberty, is easily seen; and why those, who are 'for supporting them, should be apprehensive and fear- 'ful from it: but christian faith and virtue must take 'firmer hold of the minds of men, and flourish more 'in their lives by it.'

These great and good effects mentioned by Mr. *Benson* and Mr. *Mole*, seem also to be most earnestly desired by Dr. *Doddridge* in these words, [1] 'I would hope, the at- 'tacks made on common Christianity, are in some mea- 'sure leading us to this: and I earnestly pray, that infi- 'nite wisdom may over-rule that evil, to the production 'of so great a good.' For as he elsewhere adds, [2] 'It is 'thus that meat often comes out of the eater, and sweet- 'ness out of the fierce; and the subtile are taken in their 'own craftiness. The grossness of such visible and pal- 'pable snares engages prudent people to avoid the path in 'which they lie, and so secures them from others of a 'finer contexture, and a more dangerous form.'

With these views therefore, and for this end only, agreeable to Mr. *Barker*'s advice in his introductory Sermon to the Lectures preached against Popery at *Salters-Hall*, I have taken upon me to publish these remarks; and if they may in the least contribute to so necessary, and *desirable* a reformation, I shall greatly rejoice, little regarding

[9] *Grounds, &c.* p. 75, 76. [1] Third Letter, p. 44. [2] First Letter, p. 32.

garding what angry perſons bigotted to human forms and corrupt traditions may ſay, or think of them.

Had the practice of our Pædobaptiſt brethren been ridiculed after the manner of this objection by one of the Baptiſt perſuaſion, they might perhaps have been greatly diſpleaſed, and returned very different anſwers to us. But coming from an Infidel, it appears ſo juſt, and of ſo much weight, that our brethren ſeem greatly alarmed by it: and in order to defend Chriſtianity, they have, in effect, given up infant-baptiſm, as an human appointment only, and as ſuch entirely indefenſible by ſcripture and antiquity. Hereby they have manifeſted a true love and regard for the religion of Jeſus, above their own forms and traditions, ſo long joined with it, and practiſed as a part of it. A good ſtep this towards that reformation, which hath been ſo long wanted, as the moſt certain way to prevent ſuch objections, and the moſt likely means of uniting all Chriſtians; but is now become abſolutely neceſſary for their own vindication, to ſecure themſelves from the charge of inconſiſtency, or being ſelf-condemned in carrying on a ſolemn farce, doing that *in the name of the Lord, which they own, the Lord hath not commanded* them; an acknowledged *abſurdity no where expreſsly reveal'd in the New Teſtament*, which is alſo ſaid to be *ſo much a ſtranger to any ſuch ſentiments or practices, that the rational believers of Chriſtianity have nothing further to do with, but to diſown and diſavow them.* And this appears ſo clearly in their ſeveral anſwers to this objection, that I ſhall give them my readers at large, adding thereto ſome few remarks. And as our famous Univerſities claim precedency, I will begin firſt with theirs.

SECT. I.

Remarks on the Cambridge *Letter.*

THE *Cambridge* young gentleman introduces his anſwer to the objection above, with the following remarkable paragraph. And if what is therein contained, had been ſtrictly attended to by all, who have aſſumed the chriſtian name, I am perſuaded there would have been no room for anſwering ſuch objections.

'Writers of your rank, *says he*, [3] ſhould have ſtronger 'apprehenſions of miſchief, from the folly and fury 'which naturally attend ignorance, bigotry, and pre-'ſumed inſpiration, than from the ſpirit and temper of 'the rationaliſt. To preſerve a ſenſe of religion among 'mankind, is ſurely, in ſome degree, neceſſary to the 'peace and welfare of ſociety. And if we believe the 'ſupreme Being hath interpoſed in this affair, it becometh 'us to ſuppoſe, he hath done it in a WISE AND WOR-'THY MANNER. In all the conſtructions we make of 'his declared will and pleaſure, with regard to our faith 'and practice, NOTHING EVIDENTLY DISHONOUR-'ABLE IS TO BE ALLOWED. Reflections of this 'kind have engaged good and wiſe men to aſcribe 'righteouſneſs to their maker, and to endeavour to bring 'a good report on PURE AND UNDEFILED RELI-'GION.

'You aſk, p. 9. "Can a man be baptized into a rational "religion." 'By commenting on the form of baptiſm 'in our church, you endeavour to eſtabliſh the negative; 'which you conclude with: yet ſuch is the pleaſure and 'ordinance of God himſelf in this point.' But ſuch pleaſure and ordinance of God reſpecting infant-baptiſm, is fully and clearly diſowned by our young Gentleman, in theſe words. 'All this is ſaid, as if the whole of your 'account was expreſsly revealed in the New Teſtament.' And then he proceeds giving up their church eſtabliſh-ments, and 39 articles alſo, as ſavouring too much of human *appointments*, and thereby deviating from original Chriſtianity, when he adds, 'The forms and modes of 'worſhip, the manner of adminiſtring the ſacraments, 'and definitions and decrees relating to doctrines, as far 'as they are human appointments, do not belong to our 'conſideration.' What! not to the conſideration of thoſe who own and practiſe them in bar of the pure truths and appointments of Chriſt? I ſhould rather have thought, that they were under the higheſt obligation to conſider them.

In the next page he affirms, 'God hath only required 'what is ſhort, plain, and evidently connected with 'our duty.' And here he ſays, 'with original Chriſtia-'nity only is our preſent concern.' Thus he hath wiſely evaded the objection, becauſe perhaps he might find that the principles, and practice of his church in this particular

[3] Page 4.

lar are indefenſible; and for the ſame reaſon, acknowledging the inſuperable difficulties thereby brought upon our holy religion, he prudently avoids giving any anſwer to another objection, by ſaying, p. 9, 10. 'We have already obſerved, that all our preſent concern is with 'pure and ſimple Chriſtianity; and not to account for 'difficulties added by religious eſtabliſhments. You are 'not therefore to expect any remarks on the article concerning good works done before faith, &c. But to your 'queſtion, ſays our Gentleman, p. 5. was there ever in 'the world a religion which deſerved the name of rational? Have there not been, in many religions, ſeveral 'things very fitting and reaſonable, tho' attended with 'many and ſhocking abſurdities? Hath not the Chriſtian 'religion as fair and juſt a pretence as any other to be 'deemed rational?' It is no pretence to ſay the Chriſtian religion is rational. It is really ſo in itſelf, and ought not to be compared with others; for tho' under the church of *England*, and ſome other eſtabliſhments, it may be attended, if I may not be allowed to ſay, *with many and ſhocking abſurdities*, I think, I may with many things indefenſible, inconſiſtent with reaſon, and primitive Chriſtianity. Yet, by his own confeſſion, this cannot be true of *pure and ſimple Chriſtianity*, which itſelf hath no *difficulties to account for*, and ſuch things being only *added* thereto *by human appointments*, we have, according to Mr. Mole, *nothing further to do, but to diſown and diſavow them; as we very well may*, what our young Gentleman adds, as follows: 'Where is the abſurdity of 'the relations and friends of infants dedicating them to 'the ſervice of God, and engaging to bring them up in 'the fear and reverence of their maker, and in all the 'virtues and duties which become us as ſocial beings?'

For is it not this very practice of ſprinkling infants *in the name of the Lord*, on which this Infidel's objection is founded? And are not theſe words of his juſtly applicable to them? [4] 'It is impoſſible, ſurely, when we conſider to whom we 'muſt aſcribe them, that any ſuch abſurd ſchemes can 'any longer be ſuppoſed, that we can ever imagine, that 'the great author and finiſher of our faith ſhould have 'contrived us an irrational one, to be afterwards ſuperſeded, or even confirmed by a rational one.' Which is the well-known appointment, and practice of our eſta-

 bliſhed

[4] *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument*, p. 10, 11.

bliſhed church. Their infants commence Chriſtians and church-members, when they have not the exerciſe of underſtanding, and are entirely ignorant of what is done; and this unwarrantable act of their ſponſors is afterwards ſuppoſed to be ſuperſeded, and confirmed by the infants themſelves, when they come to years of underſtanding. For when they come to be confirmed by the biſhops, then the ſponſors are ſuppoſed to be diſcharged from all the obligations, which they, I can hardly ſay, ſolemnly entered into. But at the very time, when they laid themſelves under thoſe engagements, if they had at all conſidered, they muſt have been aſſured, that it was impoſſible to make them good; and that ſuch promiſes, in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech, never were fulfilled by any one infant, for whom they were made, if it lived to years of maturity.

But as our young Gentleman expreſſes himſelf, [5] 'Is it 'indeed doing honour to God, to ſuppoſe we become ac-'ceptable to him, by renouncing our moſt diſtinguiſhing 'excellency in the moſt exalted and excellent affair of re-'ligion? Is this the peculiar glory of the goſpel revela-'tion, that it teacheth us to cultivate warm affections and 'blind zeal; to have a ſteady and ſtrong faith, but not to 'preſume to inquire why or what we believe? [*or pro-'miſe.*] By children, ideots, and ignorant pagans, when 'they can once pronounce the words, creeds may be re-'peated. Now, tho' they cannot connect ſenſe with 'their words, do they commence believers, by having 'an unaccountable liking and affection for theſe ſounds?' But thus accompliſhed, perſons receive Confirmation, and then are accounted rational Chriſtians, and thereby intitled to the holy communion, tho' they may afterwards live in all manner of wickedneſs; for under ſome certain circumſtances, what pious miniſter durſt refuſe it them; but they are not permitted to approach the Lord's table before confirmation, notwithſtanding their baptiſm, and the vows of their ſureties for them. Firſt, *That they ſhould renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this world, and all the ſinful luſts of the fleſh.* Secondly, *That they ſhould believe all the articles of the chriſtian faith.* And Thirdly, *That they ſhould keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the ſame all the days of their lives.* In the miniſtration of the public baptiſm of infants, the miniſter addreſſes the ſureties thus;

'Doſt

[5] Page 38.

'Doſt thou in the name of this child renounce the de-
'vil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the
'world, with all the covetous deſires of the ſame, and
'the carnal deſires of the fleſh, ſo that thou wilt not fol-
'low, nor be led by them?

Anſwer. 'I renounce them all.

Miniſter. 'Doſt thou believe in God the Father al-
'mighty, maker, &c.

Anſwer. 'All this I ſtedfaſtly believe.

Miniſter. 'Wilt thou be baptized in this faith?

Anſwer. 'That is my deſire.

Miniſter. 'Wilt thou then obediently keep God's
'holy will and commandments, and walk in the ſame all
'the days of thy life?

Anſwer. 'I will.

'Propoſitions, ſays our Gentleman, [6] 'of an indiffer-
'ent nature, and in which the welfare of mankind,
'neither here nor hereafter, is in any degree concerned,
'we are not bound to apprehend and believe. But when
'the caſe is quite different, attention and application are
'proper and neceſſary. [*For*] the truth of the goſpel [*In-
'ſtitution*] is a very material point in queſtion.' But with how little ſerioufneſs, piety and devotion, and with what groſs ignorance, this eſtabliſhed order of the church of *England*, for making infants Chriſtians and church-members, is frequently accompanied, Dr. *Wall* freely acknowledges in theſe very words, where he alſo prefers adult-baptiſm before it.

[7] 'The ſolemnity of the circumſtances in the admini-
'ſtration of baptiſm, (as alſo of the other ſacrament)
'does very powerfully ſtrike and affect the mind of any
'devout Chriſtian that ſees it adminiſtered. The baptiſm
'of an infant cannot have all the ſolemnity which that
'of an adult perſon may have. The previous faſting and
'prayer, the penitent confeſſion, the zeal and humility,
'and deep affection of the receiver may be viſible there;
'which cannot be in the caſe of an infant. But for that
'very reaſon we ought not to deprive the adminiſtration
'of this ſacrament to infants of any ſolemnity of which
'it is capable.

'The immerſion of the perſon (whether infant or
'adult) in the poſture of one that is buried and raiſed up
'again,

[6] Page 37. [7] *Defence of his Hiſtory, &c.* p. 404, to 410.

' again, is much more ſolemn, and expreſſes the deſign ' of the ſacrament, and the myſtery of the ſpiritual waſh- ' ing much better, than pouring a ſmall quantity of wa- ' ter on the face. And that pouring of water is ' much better than ſprinkling, or dropping a drop ' of water on it. If it be done in the church in, or at ' the font, and the congregation do join in the prayers ' there uſed; it is much more ſolemn than in a bed-cham- ' ber, out of a baſon, or pipkin, a tea-cup, or a punch- ' bowl, and a bed-chamber is perhaps not quite ſo ſcandal- ' ous as a kitchen or ſtable; to which things look as if they ' would bring it at laſt.

' Theſe he calls innovations and alterations for the ' worſe, the vilipendiums of the holy ſacrament ſhewn ' and uſed in the baptizing of infants.'

And after he has enumerated many of the ill conſe- quences and abuſes that attend it, and which he calls *abſurd and ridiculous*, he adds; ' The profanation and in- ' dignity in general on this ſacrament, on occaſion of ' this houſe-baptiſm, is ſo notorious, that I do appeal to ' the experience and conſcience of all that uſe it, if they ' themſelves be not ſcandalized at the indecent circum- ' ſtances that do almoſt always attend it. All the regard ' is commonly given to the preparations for eating and ' drinking; very little to the ſacrament. Very few ' of the company join in the prayers; but only in the ' feaſting and carnal jollity, which is too often carried on ' to ſuch exceſs, as is more likely to bring a curſe than ' a bleſſing upon the whole undertaking. This is com- ' monly yet worſe when it is in an ale-houſe, or other lewd ' houſe. Thoſe, who in ſuch caſes are choſen for godfa- ' thers and godmothers, are generally perſons ignorant of ' the terms of the baptiſmal covenant themſelves; and ' when they ſhould make anſwer in the name of the ' child to the holy interrogatories, they neither mind the ' ſubſtance of the thing aſked, nor do know what anſwer is ' fit to make; but do only in a ridiculous manner give a ' bow, a curteſy, or a nod; and that often not without ' apparent ſigns of mockery; and they frequently ſhew a ' very vain, irreverent, and wanton behaviour before, ' and in, and after the ſacred adminiſtration. Is not this ' enough to turn the ſtomach of any ſerious Chriſtian ' that is preſent? And if they reflect with themſelves, ' and think; *Is this the way that I was baptized in?* to ' occaſion perhaps their falling into the error we are ſpeak- ' ing of, and reſolving to be baptized again? Can a mi-

' niſter

'niſter of Chriſt take any comfort, or can he think that 'the dignity of the holy office which he is performing, 'is preſerved in ſuch management. In all pariſhes where 'baptiſm at the church is generally left off, the people are 'ſo ignorant of what is to be done and ſaid at the bap-'tiſm, (. . .) that if a child be brought to church to be 'baptized, neither are the congregation ſenſible of their 'duty of joining in the prayers, nor do the godfathers 'know what anſwer they are to make; but there are holy 'queſtions publicly put without any one to anſwer; 'which, however it paſſes in a bed-chamber, is a great 'ſcandal and abſurdity when a ſacrament is adminiſtring 'in a chriſtian congregation.'

More of this kind may be ſeen in the pages before referred to. But enough has been tranſcribed to ſhew what evils naturally reſult from a church's laying aſide the purity of Chriſt's inſtitution, and ſubſtituting inſtead thereof ſuch traditions and inventions of men, *Mark* vii. 7, 8. as are neither worthy of the chriſtian name, nor profitable to the ſouls of mankind. For when men once depart from the ſcripture rule, their ſeems to be no end of their degeneracy; one innovation making way for another to ſucceed, till in the iſſue, they get into ſuch ſuperſtitious and irreligious extremes in the uſe of them, as *are enough to turn the ſtomach of any ſerious Chriſtian*; while *the miniſters themſelves are ſcandalized by the practice*, even in the opinion of Dr. *Wall* himſelf. No wonder therefore that irreligion abounds, for ſuch things muſt of courſe cheriſh a ſpirit of infidelity; and make men think, that if they are ſcripture ordinances, there can be nothing in Chriſtianity, which is in the leaſt worthy of their regard. And hence we may alſo plainly learn the abſolute neceſſity of a reformation, in order to maintain and perpetuate the chriſtian religion to riſing poſterity, with that veneration and eſteem, it juſtly deſerves, which cannot be done, without returning back to the primitive practice of this divine ordinance, in exact conformity to the ſcripture rule. For beſides them any profanations accompanying infant-baptiſm, as above recited, it may perhaps, when moſt decently adminiſtred, be nothing better than proſtituting, or profaning a ſolemn inſtitution, by applying it, contrary to the deſign of our Lord Jeſus, to ſuch unfit ſubjects, as are no ways capable, nor in the leaſt worthy of it, for want of thoſe moral qualifications, which are by him made neceſſary to the beneficial adminiſtration of this ordinance

ordinance to all his true disciples and followers. And as that, which I have transcribed above from the catechism and rubric of the church of *England*, is no where *expressly revealed in the New Testament*, which is the only justifiable authority, by which a protestant church of Christ can consistently support their religious rites: so to do those things, as acts of religion, *in the name of the Lord*, is expresly forbidden in scripture, and with a severe penalty too, *because the Lord hath not commanded it*, Deut. xviii. 15—20.

And moreover, to use the words of our Gentleman, [8] 'This is further illustrated by the instance of musick, 'and the case of him who wants both taste and an ear. 'Needless are all these arguings; for impossibilities are not 'expected from us, either by God or by any reasonable 'man; and perfect incapacity affordeth a perfect excuse.' And the *Oxford* Reply with the greatest truth affirms; [9] '*That infants have no reason, nor are they therefore capable of religion*; and yet they proceed in their name, and as their act, by sponsors whom they never did, nor were ever able to substitute, to ask an infant void of understanding, *Dost thou renounce*, &c? *dost thou believe*, &c? *and wilt thou be baptized*, &c? and then, notwithstanding it is utterly incapable of speech, to make it answer by such proxies, *I renounce them all. All this I stedfastly believe*, and *that is my desire*. After which, tho' the child be quite destitute of every prerequisite essential to the ordinance of baptism, as it is plainly declared in their catechism, yet the minister with much absurdity and little truth says, *I baptize thee*, when instead thereof, he only sprinkles a few drops, or just wipes his wet hand upon the face. Is not all this monstrously absurd, as well as false? And what signifies their disowning, and giving up such corruptions in words only, as unscriptural and unchristian, while in fact they continue to practise them, as an essential part of their religion, tho' not of the christian religion? Is this consistent, or are such answers the way to satisfy infidels, to silence their objections, and bring them into communion with their church?'

And whereas our *Cambridge* Gentleman says, [1] 'Happy would it be for man, in his present and future state, 'were these promises duly regarded by those whose business 'it is to instruct, and did good instructions make a last-'ing

[8] Page 11. [9] *Oxford Reply*, p. 8. [1] *Cambridge Letter*, page 5.

' ing and proper impreſſion when they are given ;' would not theſe good effects be much more likely to attend the due adminiſtration of this ordinance to the proper ſubjects of it, who well underſtand what they promiſe, and perſonally engage to fulfil the ſame? This is all the anſwer, which ſeems to be particularly deſigned by the *Cambridge* young Gentleman, to this objection. For in the next paragraph he falls of, and aſſerts, that, ' The mate-' rial and moſt important particulars of religion, are ' truths allowed and acknowledged by all, Atheiſts ex-' cepted.' If amongſt Chriſtians, till the preſent age, this be true of baptiſm, which according to ſcripture is ſuch an *important duty* of our religion, that the pardon of ſin is by promiſe annexed to it; we are very ſure it is not true of infant-ſprinkling, which is indeed ' a diſtin-' guiſhing point . . . . . [*with ſome*] parties, more ear-' gerly and induſtriouſly inculcated than the weightier ' matters of the law. By a zeal for [*this*] have not ' men in [*many*] ages and places of the world attained ' to high fame and reputation,' [*with ſome deluded and inconſiderate admirers of it, who have not made that*] ' proper diſtinction and ſeparation,' [*between truth and error, between divine and human appointments, as might juſtly*] ' be expected ;' [*notwithſtanding that prieſtly reproach, in part borrowed from this infidel writer, and caſt by him upon his fellow mortals, whom he calls*] ' the bulk of man-' kind ;' [*Whoſe*] ' heads are only turned to the confuſed ' ſound of words,' as if the powers and faculties of mind in moſt men were not ſo good as his own ; nor capable of diſtinguiſhing themſelves ſo eminently under the like culture and advantage of education. But from his own confeſſion afterwards it does not appear, that our abilities, our integrity, or our attainments are much, if at all, inferior to many of his learned brethren, of whom he ſays, [a] ' Even in the learned world, I mean, thoſe who have had ' a learned education, how inconſiderable is the number ' who are either able, or willing, or dare to think? Now ' ſince ſuch as theſe are almoſt wholly paſſive, having no ' deſires, no deſigns, to fetch in materials for thinking, ' what happeneth to this idle, and indolent herd, is of ' ſmall importance. They never can be poſſeſſed of real ' knowledge. Inſignificant ſounds are their only accom-' pliſhments. As for thoſe who conſider and ſhew them-' ſelves men, who accuſtom themſelves to reflections and ' reviews, and who are under no terrors, either from tem-

[a] Page 28.

'poral or ſpiritual powers, with them prepoſſeſſion is not a 'very important point.' And he appears to have much juſter notions of God, and his dealings with ſuch *confuſed heads*, as we laymen are repreſented to be, by adding, 'And when this is owing to the want of capacity and op-'portunity, they are excuſable before the great ruler of 'the univerſe, who only expects returns according to the 'talents we have received. As for thoſe who by their 'ſtate and condition are in full poſſeſſion of the means of 'information,' meaning, I ſuppoſe, himſelf and his brethren of the Univerſities, with the reſt of the learned world; 'on them it is incumbent to review the ſuggeſ-'tions of education, and to practiſe care and impartiality 'in the important affair of religion.' And it is the more neceſſary for them to do ſo, that this complaint of God by the prophet may no longer be applicable to them. *The leaders of this people cauſe them to err*, Iſa. ix. 16. For, if by their Canons and Church authority, any errors have been propagated, any human appointments eſtabliſhed, inſtead of thoſe which Chriſt inſtituted, as ſet forth in the holy ſcriptures; and they are now convinced, that our holy religion cannot be defended againſt the attacks of an infidel, without giving up ſuch *human eſtabliſhments, as no where expreſsly revealed in the New Teſtament:* they are bound in conſcience, as they will anſwer it in the great day of account, to repeal ſuch canons; and make uſe of their power and authority, not by penal laws to eſtabliſh, but by chriſtian methods to promote the truth, and the practice of every chriſtian ordinance, according to the rule of ſcripture, in order to perfect that reformation, which was in part begun many years ago. Nor can there be the leaſt reaſon for our eſtabliſhed church to be afraid of ſetting about ſo good and neceſſary a work, becauſe it would only be acting entirely conſiſtent with her own articles; in which every one of her miniſters has, in a very ſolemn manner, declared his ſtedfaſt and firm belief. And may ſhe not very juſtly expect, that all her other members likewiſe will peaceably and quietly acquieſce in ſuch a reformation, for as much as her xxth and xxxivth articles ſay expreſsly, that 'The church hath power to decree rites or ceremo-'nies, and authority in controverſies of faith: and yet it 'is not lawful for the church to ordain any thing that is 'contrary to God's word written, neither may it ſo ex-'pound one place of ſcripture, that it be repugnant to 'another. Wherefore, although the church be a witneſs

'and

'and a keeper of the holy writ, yet as it ought not to decree any thing againſt the ſame, ſo beſides the ſame ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for neceſſity of ſalvation.

'It is not neceſſary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly alike; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diverſity of countries, times and men's manners, ſo that nothing be ordained againſt God's word. . . . . Every particular or national church hath authority to ordain, change, and aboliſh ceremonies or rites of the church, ordained only by man's authority, ſo that all things be done to edifying.'

And we have reaſon to hope for this reformation, not only from the frequent and open conceſſions they make us; but alſo becauſe this learned member of one of our Univerſities in behalf of himſelf and others aſſures us, that 'The practical points of Chriſtianity being plain and evident, as to theſe there can be no alteration, when we are reſolved to be and to do good.' This character I therefore hope they will juſtly deſerve, and pray God it may be fully manifeſted in him, and in all the other members of our two famous Univerſities, till pure and ſimple Chriſtianity, free from all human mixtures, is ſtrictly adhered to, and univerſally practiſed in their church. And we have alſo the like encouragement to hope for this from the *Oxford Reply* to the ſame objection: which I will next conſider.

SECT. II.

Remarks on the Oxford *Reply.*

THE *Oxford* young Gentleman in the beginning of his letter aſſures us, 'His opinion is, that a religion intended for men muſt be a reaſonable religion. That we are not to take things always upon truſt; but, ſo far as our abilities and opportunities will carry us, to examine and judge for ourſelves; and to this end, (which, *ſays he*, of all others I look upon to be the moſt weighty and important) I told you my reſolution was to bend all my academical ſtudies.' And for this he has

 given

[3] *Cambridge Letter*, p. 12.

given a very juſt and weighty reaſon, [4] where he ſays, 'It 'muſt be granted, that the prejudices of education have 'great force upon our minds in favour of the opinions 'we have imbibed in our younger years.'

If *to examine and judge for ourſelves* in the great affair of religion be *of all others the moſt weighty and important, ſo that we are not therein to take things upon truſt*; ſurely it muſt highly become our Oxonian Gentleman, and every other Pædobaptiſt, moſt ſeriouſly to weigh and conſider, whether another perſon's doing any thing to them, as an act of religion, without their knowledge and conſent, and without any command from God, can be at all acceptable to him; or is ſufficient to exempt them afterwards from a perſonal and voluntary ſubmiſſion and obedience to the inſtitution of Chriſt, when they come to years of underſtanding, and are capable of the qualifications, which the ſcriptures direct to, and accordingly in the judgment of our eſtabliſhed church, are therein required of perſons to be baptized. This leads me to conſider his anſwer to the objection againſt a rational faith, ariſing from the practice of infant-baptiſm, which begins thus:

[5] 'You aſk, p. 9. Can a man be baptized into a rational 'religion? Which queſtion, in the terms in which it is 'conceived, is a very extraordinary one. Can a man be 'baptized, *&c?* Why not, Sir? Will you give me leave to 'aſk in my turn: Can a man believe a rational religion, 'and make profeſſion of it? I hope he may. And what 'does being baptized imply more than this?'

If being baptized imply *the believing and making profeſſion of a rational religion*, or in the terms of their church catechiſm, '*Repentance, whereby they forſake ſin; and faith, whereby they ſtedfaſtly believe the promiſes of God made to them in that ſacrament*;' then infants cannot poſſibly be the ſubjects of it, and this he has moſt frankly and honeſtly acknowledged in theſe words. [6] 'But by what follows 'I gueſs you would have ſaid, Can that be a reaſonable re-'ligion, into which infants are baptized? For you pre-'ſently aſk again, Where is reaſon concerned when 'babes accept the terms of ſalvation by deputy? *To which he thus replies*, 'The reaſon of the infants them-'ſelves is no ways concerned in it. They have no rea-'ſon, nor are they therefore capable of religion.' Is it not therefore a very great reproach upon their church, to enact

[4] Page 18. [5] *Oxford Reply*, p. 7. [6] Ibid. p. 8.

enact ſuch things for them, and in the ſame book publicly declare to all the world: *That baptiſm* is only *the outward and viſible ſign of the inward and ſpiritual grace in the perſon baptized*, ſignifying *his death unto ſin, and new birth unto righteouſneſs*; and that *infants, by reaſon of their tender age, are unable to perform* the neceſſary requiſites for their admiſſion to it? Would it not be much wiſer and better for our eſtabliſhed church to wait, till they are *capable of religion*; till *the inward and ſpiritual grace*, and all the neceſſary qualifications for that ſacred ordinance appear in them; till they can *confeſs with the mouth the Lord Jeſus, and believe in their heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead?* Rom. x. 8—15. But to eſtabliſh a method of procedure diametrically oppoſite to all this, and at the ſame time acknowledge it to be ſo, as, I think, their words ſufficiently declare, are indeed ſuch ſhocking contradictions, and ſuch a glaring reproach to their church, that our Oxonian, in contending with an Infidel, could not pretend to vindicate, and only ſeems willing to palliate, by adding in very modeſt and cautious terms. 'But they [*that is infants,*] may, ſo far as I can 'judge at preſent, by the mercies of God be capable of 'being admitted to the benefits of his covenant.' That is, I well hope, to ſalvation by the mercies of God; for as he aſſerts elſewhere, [7] 'Before the uſe of reaſon, it '[*faith*] is not neceſſary at all; *i. e.* (....) neceſſary to 'ſave us from the penalties of the law; nor is it neceſ-'ſary, in this ſenſe, at any time afterwards, but accord-'ing to circumſtances.' Agreeable to which he ſays, [8] 'Faith is neceſſary to all who may be convinced by the 'evidence offered; but I do not know that it is neceſ-'ſary to thoſe, who having done their utmoſt cannot 'free themſelves from ſcruples; neceſſary, I ſay, to ſave 'them from the penalties which the goſpel threatens to 'unbelievers.' And I wiſh, that Pædobaptiſts in our controverſy would but carefully regard the ſame advice and caution, which this Oxonian here directs his author to, *namely* 'Say honeſtly what the goſpel is, and [*Infidels* 'may] do [*their*] worſt. But it is not fair to load it with 'abſurdities of [*their*] own inventions.' Such things only make them inconſiſtent, and give Infidels advantage; and therefore, if in the paſſage I was upon, our young Gentleman means any thing concerning baptiſm, as I fear he does, tho' the ſcriptures are entirely ſilent about any

[7] Page 55. [8] Page 17.

any covenant for their admiſſion to it, it is given up again in the very next words directed to his author. 'You, perhaps, may be of another opinion;' [*namely that infants cannot be ſaved without baptiſm, as too many weak Chriſtians have pretended.*] 'But what has this queſtion to 'do with the truth of religion?' [*What indeed, as infants are incapable of religion,* and *the New Teſtament ſays nothing of their being baptized?*] 'But' *he goes on plainly denying what the Deiſt alledged, as I before obſerved the* Cambridge *letter had done,* 'You lay it down peremptorily, 'that it is the pleaſure and ordinance of God that infants ſhould be baptized; becauſe, I ſuppoſe, it beſt 'ſuited your purpoſe. For you know very well, that all 'Chriſtians are not of a mind in this matter; and it 'ſhews you are hard put to it for arguments againſt Chriſtianity, to lay hold of a diſputed practice, and build 'upon it as a plain, expreſs law of Chriſt.' After this follows a more free and ingenuous confeſſion, than is often met with from any Pædobaptiſts, but thoſe of our eſtabliſhed church. 'I do not remember any paſſage in 'the New Teſtament, which ſays expreſsly, that infants 'ſhould be baptized; and as I am informed by better 'judges, the evidences for this practice from antiquity, 'tho' very early, do not fully come up to the times of the 'apoſtles.'

Here is ſcripture and the beſt antiquity given up at once by this learned member of our Univerſity, as containing nothing in them *expreſsly* for the practice of *infant-baptiſm*; and from this conviction therefore, he very modeſtly and very wiſely ſubjoins: 'So that if I did believe the 'receiving children into covenant by baptiſm to be ſo abſurd a thing as you ſeem to think it; I ſhould judge it 'to be more reaſonable to queſtion the agreeableneſs of 'this practice, (how general ſoever,) to the inſtitution of 'Chriſt, than to reject the goſpel on that account.'

This being the whole of our *Oxford* young Gentleman's Reply to this objection, I ſhall only aſk him further, how far the continuing a practice, the agreeableneſs of which to the inſtitution of Chriſt, he queſtions, can be juſtified by St. *Paul's* rule of conduct, *Rom.* xiv. 22—23. as himſelf explains it, p. 31, 32: where, as his brother at *Cambridge* had done, he alſo gives up the validity of their church articles, with her *definitions and determinations in matters of religion?* The whole paſſage runs thus. 'But how do 'you prove, that natural religion will ſtand a man in

'no

' no ſtead? Why, by appealing to an article of the ' church of *England*, which ſays, that works done before ' the grace of Chriſt, are not pleaſant to God, nor do ' they make men meet to receive grace.' [*Of what uſe ' can infant-baptiſm be then?*] ' I am not divine enough, ' Sir, to ſettle the preciſe meaning of this article. It ' may poſſibly be this, that our beſt and moſt perfect natu- ' ral ſtate is ſo defective, that we cannot plead acceptance ' with God, without his free, undeſerved mercy in the ' pardon of our ſins; which I think is true. But ſup- ' poſing the doctrine of the article to be as you would re- ' preſent it, what would be the conſequence? Are you ' of thoſe who think it reaſonable to ſet down the deci- ' ſions of a particular church as the ſtandard of the chriſ- ' tian doctrine? For decency you do indeed quote a text ' of ſcripture; *Whatſoever is not of faith, is ſin.* But you ' cannot, I apprehend, lay any real ſtreſs upon this, ' which even I (unſkilled in the ſcriptures as I am) can ſee ' is nothing to the purpoſe. The Apoſtle was ſpeaking ' of eating certain meats, concerning which the queſ- ' tion was, whether they might lawfully be eaten or not. ' In theſe caſes he directs, that every man ſhould take care ' to ſatisfy his own judgment, and not do any thing un- ' perſuaded of the lawfulneſs of it. *I know and am per- ' ſuaded that nothing is unclean of itſelf; but to him ' that eſteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is un- ' clean: Rom.* xiv. 14. To eat, whilſt I doubt whether ' I may lawfully eat or not, is not of faith, and *Whatſo- ' ever is not of faith, is ſin, ver.* 23. What tendency ' has this to ſhew that God will damn men for their ' moſt innocent miſtakes; or that the beſt faith they ' can get, the beſt life they can lead, will be of no ' account, if in all points a man believes not aright? ' If you know of any other text that ſays this, ' produce it, and it ſhall be admitted. But to ſay ' that the church of *England* teaches this is ſaying ' nothing.' For if it were true that this is the ſenſe of the article (which I verily believe it is not) I would anſwer as I have already anſwered in another caſe: IT IS MORE REASONABLE TO GIVE UP THE ARTICLE THAN THE GOSPEL.'

The juſt ſentiments, which theſe young members of our Univerſities have told us, they entertain concerning church authority, and deciſions in matters of religion, are much fuller expreſſed by Mr. *Mole*, ſo as to ex-

tend to all Pædobaptiſt churches, in his anſwer to the ſame argument from the article of the church of *England*, in theſe words. [9] 'Our author indeed has an expreſſion of his church, which may be of ſome ſervice with thoſe, who will be concluded by ſuch kind of authority: but what matters it how his church, or any other ſuch church, has expreſſed this, or any other matter whatever? Could the deciſions of ever ſo many churches, and ever ſo well conſtituted, be produced to the contrary; what is there, that the nature of any ſuch human aſſurances can poſſibly afford us, that has not more than a ballance in ſuch an authority as that of God? The authority our author quotes is of a piece with his aſſertion, falſhood and abſurdity are upheld by ſuch authority; but the doctrine of Chriſt, as it is of a different nature, ſtands upon a very different ground.'

But the author of Chriſtianity not founded on Argument hath dropped a ſuggeſtion, of which neither the *Cambridge* Letter, nor the *Oxford* Reply, had reaſon to take any notice, becauſe to be ſure they believe it is true. Yet Mr. *Mole* hath taken occaſion from thence to caſt ſome reflections upon our eſtabliſhed church, tho', in my apprehenſion, it does not appear with a very good grace, unleſs there was more difference between hers, and the Preſbyterian eſtabliſhment, reſpecting the commencement of Chriſtianity and church membership in the infants of each, by bringing them to what they both falſly call baptiſm, tho' they are equally unqualified for it.

SECT. III.

Remarks on the office of baptiſm in the kirk of Scotland, *and the* Engliſh *directory by the aſſembly of divines.*

THAT the infants, which commence Chriſtians and church-members in the kirk of *Scotland*, are equally unqualified with thoſe in our eſtabliſhed church, the practice there as unſcriptural, and founded as intirely upon human authority, is manifeſt. The kirk of *Scotland* indeed

[9] *Grounds of the Chriſtian Faith rational*, p. 80.

deed hath reſtrained the grace of baptiſm to the infants of believers; and the *Engliſh* directory ſays; 'That *ſuch children by baptiſm are ſolemnly received into the boſom of the viſible church, ... That they are Chriſtians, and federally holy before baptiſm, and therefore are they baptized.* Innocent infants they are; but holy Chriſtians is an epithet, which no ſuch infants deſerve. But tho' they do eſteem them ſo, yet the kirk requires the parent and one godfather to engage for the child; for the order of baptiſm uſed by them is as follows, ...

'The infant which is to be baptized, ſhall be brought 'to church on the day appointed, to common prayer and 'preaching, accompanied with the father and godfather. 'So that after the ſermon, the child being preſented to 'the miniſter, he demandeth this queſtion.'

'Do you preſent this child to be baptized, earneſtly 'deſiring that he may be ingrafted in the myſtical body of 'Jeſus Chriſt? 'The anſwer *is*, Yea, we require the ſame.' Then follows a long diſcourſe, in which the miniſter ſays, 'Our infants appertain to him [*God*] by covenant, 'and therefore ought not to be defrauded of thoſe holy 'ſigns and badges, whereby his children are known 'from infidels and pagans.' Here I beg leave to aſk what ſpecial marks this diſtinguiſhing badge leaves upon a new-born infant, by which it may be known from an *Infidel*'s child that never was ſprinkled? I am apt to think the wiſeſt miniſter would be wholly at a loſs to tell the one from the other in two minutes time, if both were of an age, and dreſſed alike. Nor would he be able to tell, whether any other child was ever ſprinkled or not, if he was to view it ever ſo long, and with the utmoſt care and attention. But when men are ſo zealouſly determined to eſtabliſh their own human traditions upon the ruin of Chriſt's ſolemn inſtitution, they have not a due regard to his truth, or they durſt never have aſſerted what follows:

'*Neither is it requiſite, that all thoſe that receive this 'ſacrament, have the uſe of underſtanding and faith.*' If they meant here the ſprinkling, or waſhing the infant's face, as their own human inſtitution only, I ſhould agree with them; but if they mean, that thoſe things are not needful, or requiſite to baptiſm, as inſtituted by Chriſt, a greater reproach cannot be caſt upon it; nor any thing ſaid more contrary to truth. For does not the commiſſion ſay, *He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved.* Mark xvi. 16. Did not *Philip* inſiſt upon the eunuch's believing

with all his heart, as a neceſſary requiſite for his being baptized? *Acts* viii. Do the ſcriptures any where ſpeak of one ſoul baptized, who was deſtitute of underſtanding and faith? Or, do they give the leaſt hint, that ſuch may be received to that ſacred ordinance? If not, how durſt they aſſert ſuch things? Is it not directly contrary to the ſcripture, which aſſures us, that *without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God*; for *he that cometh to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* Heb. xi. 6. See alſo vi. 1, 2. And moreover St. *Peter* aſſures us, that even where the external part of baptiſm is rightly adminiſtered, it will avail nothing, if it be not accompanied with the anſwer of a good conſcience in the perſon baptized, 1 *Peter* iii. 21.

Our eſtabliſhed church knew the truth of this much better, than the kirk of *Scotland* appears to have done; and was ſo fully convinced hereof, that ſhe has honeſtly, and faithfully told us, that *repentance, whereby ſin is forſaken; and faith, whereby the promiſes of God made over in that ſacrament are ſtedfaſtly believed, are required of perſons to be baptized.* And for this reaſon it was to be ſure, that ſhe hath obliged the ſponſors to do it for infants, chuſing rather to load herſelf with a groſs abſurdity, than to deny ſo plain a truth, as the kirk of *Scotland* has done: which muſt therefore, in the ſight of God, be guilty of a much greater evil in performing her human ceremonies; at which her miniſters proceed and tell the people, that 'Without injury they [*infants*] cannot be debarred from 'the common ſign of God's children. And yet is not 'this outward action of ſuch neceſſity, that the lack 'thereof ſhould be hurtful to their ſalvation, if that, 'prevented by death, they may not conveniently be pre-'ſented to the church.' And the directory drawn up by the aſſembly of divines, and eſtabliſhed by an ordinance of parliament, *Jan.* 3, 1644, ſays, 'That outward baptiſm is 'not ſo neceſſary, that thro' the want thereof the infant is 'in danger of damnation, or the parents guilty, if they do 'not contemn or neglect the ordinance of Chriſt, when and 'where it may be had:' which however ſtrongly implies that where this is ſo neglected, that the children die without it, it may be hurtful to their ſalvation, and put them in danger of damnation, notwithſtanding their being holy Chriſtians. And this indeed hath very often been aſſerted by ſome miniſters, as if an innocent babe could be damned for the parents neglect. Such are the abſurd, unworthy

thy notions which they entertain of God the moſt righteous, moſt wiſe, and beſt of beings.

After this the miniſter proceeds and tells them, 'All 'that is meant and ſignified by [*baptiſm*] the ſcripture calleth our regeneration, which ſtandeth chiefly in theſe two points, in mortification, that is to ſay, 'a reſiſting of the rebellious luſts of the fleſh, and in 'newneſs of life, whereby we continually ſtrive to walk 'in that pureneſs and perfection, wherewith we are clad 'in baptiſm.' But the aſſembly's directory ſays, 'That 'infants are Chriſtians, and federally holy before baptiſm, 'and therefore are they baptized.' The contrariety of theſe things is manifeſt enough. For if *infants are holy Chriſtians before baptiſm*, what is the *pureneſs and perfection, wherewith* they *are clad in baptiſm*; or of what benefit can it be to them, ſince by the kirk's own confeſſion, if the parents are not negligent, the child may be ſaved without this imaginary *pureneſs and perfection?* But what proof can be given, that an infant receives the leaſt benefit by their unſcriptural ceremonies, either in body, or in mind? If an Infidel's child, which was never ſprinkled, and which by their own principles ought not to be baptized, was placed under the ſame education, is it not as likely to make as good a man, and as devout a Chriſtian? And would it not be much more likely to yield a perſonal obedience, from a principle of conſcience, to that holy ordinance, which our Lord requires, that every believer in him ſhould obſerve, on condition of being eſteemed *his friend* and *diſciple?* John viii. 31. and xv. 10—15. In this view therefore, their infants are much more likely to be injured, than benefitted, by their ſuperſtitious practice, in *teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*, Mark vii. 7, 13. founded in wild enthuſiaſm, quite deſtitute of good ſenſe, and all rational evidence. But it ſeems any jargon of words will paſs with high eſteem, and pleaſe ſome people, if the name of the church, or the aſſembly of divines be tacked to them.

But the miniſter proceeds ſaying, 'Finally, to the in-'tent that we may be aſſured, that you the father and 'the ſurety conſent to the performance hereof, declare 'here before God and the face of his congregation the 'ſum of that faith, wherein you believe, and will in-'ſtruct this child.'

'Then the father, or in his abſence, the Godfather, 'ſhall rehearſe the articles of his faith: [*the apoſtles creed*]

'which done the miniſter explaineth the ſame;' which explanation is too long, and unneceſſary to be tranſcribed here, but after that is done, then followeth a ſhort prayer, and after that, the Lord's prayer; and 'when they have 'prayed in this ſort, the miniſter requireth the child's 'name, which known, he ſaith,

'N. I baptize thee in the name of the Father, of the 'Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt. And as he ſpeaketh theſe 'words, he taketh water in his hand, and layeth it upon 'the child's forehead, which done, he giveth thanks:' the form of which I need not tranſcribe.

And yet, notwithſtanding the human inventions here recited, it is, under the *head of ſacraments*, affirmed by *publick authority*; whereby this order of baptiſm was further *commanded there to be practiſed in the ſaid kirk*, Anno 1641, that,

'To Chriſt Jeſus his holy goſpel truly preached, of 'neceſſity it is, that his holy ſacraments be annexed, and 'truly miniſtered, as ſeals and viſible confirmations 'of the ſpiritual promiſes contained in the word; and 'they be two, to wit, baptiſm, and the holy ſupper of 'the Lord Jeſus, which are then rightly miniſtered, ... 'when farther to them is nothing added, from them no-'thing diminiſhed, and in their practice nothing changed 'beſides the inſtitution of the Lord Jeſus, and practice 'of his holy apoſtles.

'And albeit the order of *Geneva*, which now is uſed in 'ſome of our churches, is ſufficient to inſtruct the dili-'gent reader how that both theſe ſacraments may be 'rightly miniſtered, yet for an uniformity to be kept, we 'have thought good to add this as ſuperabundant.

'In baptiſm we acknowledge nothing to be uſed ex-'cept the element of water only (that the word and de-'claration of the promiſes ought to precede we have ſaid 'before) wherefore whoſoever preſumeth in baptiſm to 'uſe oyl, ſalt, wax, ſpittle, conjuration and croſſing,' [*and I may alſo add, any other human inventions whatſoever, even ſprinkling or waſhing of the face, or of godfathers*, &c. *above-mentioned*] 'accuſeth the perfect inſtitution of 'Chriſt Jeſus, of imperfection. For it was void of all 'ſuch inventions deviſed by men, and ſuch as would 'preſume to alter Chriſt's perfect ordinance, you ought 'ſeverely to puniſh.'

With this ſevere cenſure, which may juſtly be applied to her own practice, ſhe breaths the true ſpirit of perſecu-

tion.

tion. And perſuant to an order of aſſembly, her miniſters oblige the parent and ſurety ſolemnly to promiſe, that *if the child live, they will teach and inſtruct it, in both* the aſſemblies catechiſms: by which an early bias is thrown upon the mind, in favour of falſe principles, and very corrupt doctrines, ſuch as are even contrary to the firſt principles of natural religion, as well as to the ſacred ſcriptures, in their juſt conſequences very hurtful to men, and utterly inconſiſtent with the moral perfections of God. For they repreſent him, as the real and cruel author of all ſin, [1] as if he had by an eternal immutable decree unchangeably fore-ordained whatſoever comes to paſs; and without any foreſight of faith, or the leaſt regard to good works performed by men, or to their perſeverance in either of them, or any other thing in the crea-

[1] *N. B.* The aſſembly's confeſſion of faith, from whence they compoſed their catechiſm, on the article of God's decrees, ſays, 'God from all eternity did by the moſt wiſe and holy counſel 'of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatſoever 'comes to paſs: *&c.* . . . . By the decree of God for the manifeſtation of his glory, ſome men and angels are predeſtinated unto everlaſting life, and others fore-ordained to everlaſting death.

'Theſe angels and men thus predeſtinated, and fore-ordained, 'are particularly and unchangeably deſigned, and their number 'is ſo certain and definite, that it cannot be either increaſed or 'diminiſhed.'

If theſe articles are true, nothing can be more inconſiſtent, than for thoſe zealous Chriſtians, who profeſs ſtedfaſtly to believe them, to anathematize their brethren, who diſbelieve many of them; and openly to declare, as they are too ready to do, that we *cannot poſſibly be ſaved*, that we *muſt neceſſarily be damned:* As a miniſter ſometime ago was pleaſed to ſay of me, only becauſe I differed from his ſentiments about ſome points of faith. My reply was to this effect; that he did not underſtand his own principles, for if God decreed and fore-ordained every thing, or whatſoever comes to paſs; he then decreed me to believe, as I do, and likewiſe fore-ordained me to own and profeſs that belief. And if the number of his elect were ſo particular, ſo certain and definite, that none of them could poſſibly fail of ſalvation, it was impoſſible for my belief, or diſbelief of any article to alter God's decree; and therefore for any thing he could tell, even upon his own principles, I might be one of God's dear children, whilſt here, notwithſtanding my preſent belief, and may, by his grace, be for ever happy in the enjoyment of him hereafter.

creature, he had by a partial and unwiſe election, of his mere arbitrary will and pleaſure, choſen ſome particular perſons to eternal life and bleſſedneſs; and alſo, without the leaſt mercy or compaſſion, had cruelly and unjuſtly, *&c.* reprobated all the reſt of mankind to diſhonour and wrath. Theſe opinions naturally tend to remove from the minds of men almoſt every motive to the practice of virtue, and to expel from thence all reſtraints from the ſenſual gratification of their vitious luſts and paſſions; to prompt and encourage them without remorſe or fear to the wilful commiſſion of all ungodlineſs, and unrighteouſneſs. For if theſe principles are true, no kind of wickedneſs can ever endanger the happineſs of the elect; nor the ſtricteſt virtue prevent the divine wrath and vengeance from being poured out upon the reprobate, and conſigning them all to the unſpeakable remedileſs miſeries of hell. And as preſumption, or deſpair naturally reſults from thoſe falſe, I might have ſaid wicked, blaſphemous, and ſoul deſtroying principles, ſo injurious to, and unbecoming the majeſty of heaven, the tender, compaſſionate Parent of the whole univerſe, *who does good to all, and whoſe tender mercies are over all his works*; who has ſworn that, he hath *no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live*; and in the moſt compaſſionate manner intreats them to turn from ſin, that they may eſcape death, and inherit life, *Ezek.* xxxiii. 11: ſo with reſpect to the falſe principles ſet forth by the aſſembly of divines, it is rather to be wondered at, that any perſons, who believe them, ſhould be truly religious, and kept from the daring ſin of preſumption, or of ſinking into the depths of deſpair, than that everlaſting ruin ſhould thereby be brought upon many, who might otherwiſe have eſcaped the miſery, which it is greatly to be feared hath been the unhappy conſequence of them to many ſouls. And what Mr. *Mole* ſays [2] is very true, that, 'If . . . our education . . . has 'conſiſted in learning and blindly receiving the creeds, 'catechiſms, or other compoſitions of fallible men, and 'being taught to take the doctrines thereof for the truths of 'Chriſtianity, upon no arguments, but the authority of 'thoſe, who compiled, or authoriſed, or acquainted us 'with thoſe ſyſtems; ſuch education conſiſts in folly and 'falſhood, and to cultivate all the effects of ſuch education, would be to confirm ourſelves in the abſurd de-

'luſions

[2] *Grounds, &c.* p. 58.

'luſions and miſtakes, which others had led us into, and 'which God knows is the caſe of myriads.'

And moreover, the books of the laſt and ſome former ages, abounding ſo much with thoſe unworthy notions of God, together with the zeal with which theſe and other doctrines of the like kind were then taught, and contended for, by Chriſtians in general, may juſtly be looked upon as the fatal ſeeds of that infidelity, which hath now produced ſo general a defection from Chriſtianity in this age. For if men once come to be perſuaded, that principles ſo contrary to the nature and perfections of God, are really contained in the bible; how can it be ſuppoſed they ſhould ever believe ſuch a revelation to come from him, or that the chriſtian religion ſhould ever be divine? But in conſequence of thoſe falſe doctrines, and the ſuppoſed neceſſity of infant-ſprinkling, many miniſters, as well as other Chriſtians, have been ready enough, with the author of *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument*, to denounce damnation, declaring, that *ſuch infants as die unbaptized, cannot be ſaved*, that there are ſuch *in hell a ſpan long*. Shocking opinion indeed! And tho' Mr. *Mole*, and the reſt of his brethren here in *England*, are generally come off from thoſe corrupt principles; yet I queſtion, whether any of them would care to ſprinkle a child, which was not born of chriſtian parents. But our eſtabliſhed church is not ſo partial, for ſhe generouſly opens her arms to all infants, and is willing to confer the grace of baptiſm, and receive them into her boſom, whether they be the children of believers, or of unbelievers; and hath taken care to provide them two other ſureties, beſides one godfather, and the parent, who is always ſuppoſed to be under the higheſt obligation to inſtruct them in the ways of piety, and train them up in the chriſtian faith.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

Remarks on Mr. Mole's *grounds of the chriſtian faith rational.*

THE ſuggeſtion referred to page 32. is thus introduced by Mr. *Mole.* [3] 'But when it is added:' "And to diſtinguiſh ſtill further our eſtabliſhed church "in particular, as the mode the moſt conformable to "that divine plan;" 'this is what I would neither deſire 'him to grant, nor grant him, if he ſhould deſire it,' [*equally as ſoon, as I would to Mr.* Mole, *and the kirk of* Scotland, *and he has full as much reaſon to do it too*] 'without his firſt proving, that this is part of the taſk, which 'is required of us by God. This is [*alſo*] to introduce a 'difficulty into the caſe far greater, than all that was in 'it before amounted to; and which, I ſhall readily con-'cur with this author, in ſuppoſing, that our reaſon is 'altogether unequal to. The arguments, which abun-'dantly evince the truth and authority of Chriſtianity, 'are calculated to prove ſomething elſe of our eſtabliſhed 'church;' [*and the kirk of* Scotland *too*] 'but by no 'means the truth of [*their*] doctrines, or authority of '[*their*] deciſions, as ſuch.' And to what this ſame author has ſaid, p. 10. 'That we are to addreſs ourſelves to 'heaven to inculcate the full complement of our belief, 'will help us to a juſt and uniform account of its whole 'nature, whilſt it points readily back to its ſource of bap-'tiſm:' Mr. *Mole* replies after this manner, [4] 'Such a 'faith indeed, as derives merely from baptiſm, has that 'for its ſource, and nothing elſe, may poſſibly be in this 'manner ſupported; being of an irrational original, it 'may be cultivated in a method conformable exactly to 'to that of its implanting: but for ſuch ſource, and ſuch 'ſupport of faith, we muſt, I imagine, look ſomewhere 'elſe than in the ſcriptures.' If Mr. *Mole* means in our eſtabliſhed church, or the church of *Rome* either; we may as well look to *Scotland*, and find the ſame juſt cauſe for reflection upon the Preſbyterian church there, and upon all the branches of it amongſt his own party here

[3] Ibid. p. 102. [4] Ibid. p. 65.

here in *England*, notwithſtanding the *faith* which it is pretended infants *derive from their parents*, or that *Chriſtianity and federal holineſs* they imagine them to have *before*, intitling them to *baptiſm*: or *that pureneſs and perfection* with which they fancy infants *are clad*, when they confer, what is ſtiled the grace of *baptiſm*, upon them. For, as I before quoted from the ſame writer, [5] 'It is impoſſible, ſurely, when we conſider to whom we muſt aſcribe them, that any ſuch abſurd ſchemes can any longer be ſuppoſed, that we can ever imagine, that the great author and finiſher of our faith ſhould have contrived us an irrational one, to be afterwards ſuperſeded, or even confirmed by a rational one.'

And as Mr. *Mole* very juſtly obſerves from the [6] ſame author, 'If any ſhould be ſo unhappy, as to be trained up in this method,' "and upon notice from his ſureties "of the condition, they had ingaged him in, ſhould "think of appealing, or making any further ſearch for "the certainty of that knowledge, in which he had been "inſtructed, and poſitively refuſe to ſtand to what they "had done in his name, till they had laid the grounds "and reaſons of their proceedings before him to his ſatiſfaction," 'or he had inquired into them for that purpoſe; he would be ſo far from deſerving the odious character of a perverſe apoſtate, that he muſt truly be looked upon, as in great meaſure a ſtranger to Chriſtianity till he had done ſo: his ſo doing would be a neceſſary ſtep to his becoming a real or rational Chriſtian; and it is not thoſe, who do this, but thoſe who do not, who are in danger of deſerving the character of aliens from the faith of Chriſt; tho' not perhaps of receiving it from ſome certain quarters.'

I readily agree with this ſentiment of Mr. *Mole*'s, and think the paſſage very applicable to the members of his own church, as well as to thoſe of other Pædobaptiſts, to whom he has not only given the greateſt encouragement for their reformation, by taking upon them a rational profeſſion of Chriſtianity with the baptized churches, upon the true ſcripture plan, free from all human mixtures: but hath alſo enforced the ſame with the ſtrongeſt motives, to prevent any heſitation about forſaking thoſe reſpective congregations, into which their parents had them rantized or ſprinkled; and has furniſhed them with very cogent

 reaſons,

[5] *Chriſtianity not founded, &c.* p. 10. [6] *Grounds, &c.* p. 70.

reaſons, why they ſhould abſolutely renounce ſuch education principles, ſuch an human, unſcriptural and unchriſtian method of gathering churches, or making Chriſtians, as *a neceſſary ſtep to their becoming real or rational Chriſtians.* And hereby they will *be ſo far from deſerving the odious character of perverſe apoſtates*, that according to him *they muſt truly be looked upon, as in great meaſure, ſtrangers to Chriſtianity, till* they *have done ſo*, and *are in danger of deſerving the character of aliens from the faith of Chriſt.* But notwithſtanding all this, I find ſuch a thorough reformation is never to be hoped for, nor in the leaſt expected to proceed from himſelf and his brethren, or from any ſuch miniſters, becauſe he aſſures us, [7] 'They, 'who profeſs even a true religion, originally built upon ra- 'tional grounds, and have themſelves eſtabliſhed it on a 'different foundation, and have led the people into a belief 'of it on that falſe bottom, are likely to be for keeping the 'rational grounds of it out of their ſight; leſt coming to 'the knowledge of them they ſhould ſee the abſurdity 'and hurtful conſequences, of having religion ſtand up- 'on any foot but its own.' [*Whether Mr.* Mole *ſpeaks this of his own knowledge and experience, I ſhall not pretend to ſay: but as he further obſerves*] 'The truly rational and ſcrip- 'tural method of propagating faith is very different from 'this, it cannot be intereſted in, or juſtly anſwerable for 'the abſurdities, it is chargeable with. Training up 'children, as God ſays *Abraham* would his, to do juſtice 'and judgment; or as *Solomon* ſpeaks, *in the way* they 'ſhould go; or as St. *Paul* exhorts, *in the nurture and* 'admonition *of the Lord*; is a quite different thing from 'training them up in the belief of doctrines, which are 'commanded to be aſſented to, or the practice of rites, 'which are commanded to be obſerved by any civil or 'church law whatſoever.' [*either in* England, Scotland, *or* Rome.]

And the reaſons, why we muſt not expect ſo much good, nor hope for ſuch a reformation from their miniſters, ſeem to be aſſigned in p. 76; where he honeſtly confeſſes, that 'ſince Chriſtianity has been eſtabliſhed under human 'forms, with the ſanction and authority of civil laws, 'and a clergy has been ſettled as a principle part of ſuch 'religious eſtabliſhments; the plan of religion has been 'greatly altered, and the work of its miniſters greatly en- 'larged. By this means defending the rights of thoſe, 'who

[7] Ibid. p. 71.

'who have eſtabliſhed it, the method in which it has been 'done, and the dignities and emoluments, with which 'they have been ſettled upon this new foundation, have 'much taken them off from attendance to thoſe offices, 'to which they were obliged upon the antient ſcriptural 'one. And as the plan of religion has been greatly al-'tered, the method of education has undergone a great 'change by it; ſince, inſtead of teaching the principles 'of reaſon and the holy ſcripture, it has hereby been 'made to conſiſt in teaching the manner and matter of 'ſuch eſtabliſhments, which in many things are evident-'ly contrary to both. And if parents of families, and 'paſtors of churches, inſtead of concurring in ſuch a me-'thod of rational and ſcriptural education, which is cal-'culated to lead to true faith and right conduct in human 'life, ſhall agree in ſubſtituting a very different one in its 'room, whereby men are led into falſe notions both of 'the faith and practice of true Chriſtianity, unhappy 'muſt be the caſe of ſuch as come under their care; they 'muſt neceſſarily come into life under great diſadvan-'tages, which their parents and paſtors will be moſt 'chargeable with the guilt of, tho' themſelves muſt in 'conſequence be conſiderable ſufferers, . . . as, where re-'ligion is preſcribed by human authority, and received on 'that ground, is really the caſe.' For *ſays he*, p. 78. 'They are the corruptions mingled with it, the falſe prin-'ciples upon which it is recommended, and the crying 'ambition, avarice, cruelty, and every contrariety to 'it in the character of its preachers, which render an 'examination into it more intricate and difficult now, 'than it was at firſt; and are the great and ſtanding ob-'ſtacles to men's coming, or being diſpoſed to come, to 'the faith of it.'

All theſe paſſages, and many others, ſeem pointed againſt our eſtabliſhed church; and therefore I was willing to let Mr. *Mole* ſee how juſtly they may be applied to Pædobaptiſt churches of other denominations. But waving further remarks in this view at preſent, I will now attend his anſwer to this alarming objection, which the author of *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument* has introduced after this manner, p. 9. that 'Application *was* '*not* intended *by the goſpel* to be made to the underſtand-'ing. . . . . I ſhall endeavour yet farther to evince, by 'looking a little into life and practice upon the occaſion, 'by tracing this faith to its known original, and pointing

'directly to the great root whence all our religious im-
'preſſions notoriouſly ſpring. By aſking you farther,
'Can a man be baptized into a rational religion?'

By life and practice here, this author does not ſeem to intend the duties of morality, but only thoſe religious acts, which ſome Chriſtians perform, as the poſitive appointments of the goſpel. And as thoſe, who are ſtrangers to the chriſtian religion, are moſt likely to paſs judgment of it by what they ſee and obſerve in the life and practice of its profeſſors, performed by them as the appointments of Chriſt, and eſſential parts of his religion, in order to their commencing Chriſtians, or becoming members of his church; and as the kirk of *Scotland*, and other Pædobaptiſts, as well as our eſtabliſhed church, have changed or laid aſide the rational ſubject of baptiſm, and ſubſtituted inſtead thereof an irrational one; and have alſo ſuperſeded baptiſm by an act which hath nothing of the nature of baptiſm in it, for where dipping is not practiſed, there can be no baptiſm; becauſe baptiſm and dipping are the ſame thing, neither will the inſtitution of Chriſt admit of two different modes: So Mr. *Mole* had from hence the juſteſt reaſon to return the following anſwer to him, whereby he hath indeed repreſented, and ſet forth, in the ſtrongeſt and moſt moving terms, that great apoſtaſy or defection of Pædobaptiſts, from the purity of chriſtian baptiſm, together with the abſolute neceſſity they are under of a reformation herein; if they would for the future prevent ſuch objections againſt Chriſtianity, and take away occaſion from thoſe, who are perpetually ſeeking occaſion to ridicule our moſt holy religion; and thereby expoſe it to ſcorn and contempt as a very irrational thing, which has extorted this ſtrange anſwer from him.

[8] 'And muſt we indeed be concluded by this manner of
'proof? Is the chriſtian religion to be judged of, by what
'appears in the life and practice of thoſe, who make
'profeſſion of it? Is this a likely way to know, what
'the chriſtian religon is? And is it juſt, that it ſhould
'bare the blame of all the egregious follies and abſurdi-
'ties, which paſs in the world under its name? He may
'look as much and as long as he pleaſes, and we may at-
'tend him in his ſearches, without ever having this point
'evinced from any thing, that is to be diſcovered in life
'and practice upon this occaſion.' A moſt melancholy account

[8] *Grounds, &c.* p. 53.

account indeed! But he ought to have excepted the Baptiſt churches, becauſe they have kept this *ordinance as* it was *at firſt delivered*; tho', with reſpect to the practice of his own and the kirk of *Scotland*, he had too much occaſion to add ſtill further. 'He may indeed be able to ſhew 'from thence, that men pretending a commiſſion to 'teach Chriſtianity make no application by it to the un-'derſtandings of men, but endeavour to extinguiſh and 'put them out. Or he may be able to ſhew from thence, 'that many call themſelves believers, and pretend to 'faith, which neither their reaſon nor underſtanding have 'ever brought them to.' And how indeed ſhould it be otherwiſe, whilſt they account *infants believers*, and *holy Chriſtians before baptiſm:* and by their ceremonies pretend to *cloath* them *with pureneſs* and *perfection*, and make them members, or take them *into the boſom of the viſible church*; before they have any reaſon or *underſtanding to be applied unto*. And therefore, as Mr. *Mole* proceeds, 'poſſibly he 'may ſhew, that ſome very trivial matter [*even infant-'ſprinkling*] is the known original, and great root, whence 'all the religious impreſſions of great numbers of profeſ-'ſors [*both in* Scotland *and* England] notoriouſly ſpring. 'But will this prove, that the commiſſion ſuch men claim, 'is really from God, of like nature with that which 'Chriſt and his apoſtles acted with, and exerciſed in the 'manner, wherein they exerciſe theirs? Will this prove, 'that the faith ſuch men boaſt of, is the true faith, 'which is required by God in order to ſalvation; 'and that reaſon cannot lead to true faith, nor be 'the principle, which God intended ſhould do it? 'And will it hence be evinced, that the known original 'and great root, whence all the religious impreſſions of 'ſuch perſons notoriouſly ſpring, is the real original and 'true root of that faith in Chriſt, which God requires, 'and ſincere Chriſtians exerciſe in him? If not, what is 'this conduct of our author,' [*of looking into life and practice, either under the* Engliſh, *or* Scotiſh *eſtabliſhments, for Chriſt's inſtitution of baptiſm*] 'but running away from 'faith [*or the ordinance of baptiſm*] in order to meet it; and 'turning his back upon it, in order to take a view of it? 'He ſhould have looked a little into the ſcriptures, from 'whence alone it can be known, what Chriſtianity [*Chriſ-'tian baptiſm*] and the true faith of it is. Looking into 'life and practice among many, both teachers and pro-'feſſors, is the way indeed to know what they are not, 'and may ſerve the purpoſes of miſrepreſenting their true 'nature;

'nature; but can be no likely way to do them juſtice. It 'is like looking into the church of Antichriſt to find 'that of Chriſt, or into Popery for the doctrine of the 'ſcriptures, where they are hid, and to be found only by 'looking on the reverſe.' And hence Mr. *Mole* proceeds.

'It is queried: Can a man be baptized into a rational re-'ligion? *And anſwers*, Can there be any inconvenience in 'anſwering in the affirmative? Were not men ordered to 'be baptized into the chriſtian religion? [*yes, but babes and 'infants were not*] And muſt it not be either a rational 'or an irrational one? And ſurely a man can as well be 'baptized into the former, as into the latter. [*but a babe 'or infant cannot*] The nature of Chriſtianity, as a ra-'tional religion, is, I think, as well delineated in the 'practice of baptiſm, as it is poſſible for reaſon to be re-'preſented in any rite. For conſidering it as carrying in 'its nature the promiſe of full forgiveneſs of ſins, that 'are paſt, and the obligation to complete holineſs for the 'future; how could any external rite of initiation, or 'manner of taking the profeſſion upon them, better 'ſerve to expreſs and repreſent them both, than the waſh-'ing of the bodies of ſuch, as did ſo, with water? This 'was a proper ſymbol of that remiſſion, or cleanſing of 'them from guilt, which they enjoyed by the tenor of 'the goſpel covenant; and of that future purity of life 'and manners, to which they were obliged, and freely 'conſented, by it. In both theſe views Chriſtianity ap-'pears to be a rational religion: and why might not a 'man be thus baptized into it? Why might not the com-'miſſion to preach it be executed, and ſuch baptiſm re-'quired in an application to the underſtanding? Or how 'can any religion, that is worthy of God, and fit for 'mankind, be propagated without ſuch application?'

What Mr. *Mole* can think, when he compares all this with his own unſcriptural practice of infant-ſprinkling, I know not; but ſurely his own conſcience muſt tell him, that he has here given a moſt exact deſcription of our practice, and of that of the primitive church; and that every tittle of it is abſolutely incompatible with the prac-tice of his own, and every other Pædobaptiſt church whatſoever.

'But, ſays Mr. *Mole*, it is further queried:' "Where "is reaſon concerned, when babes accept the terms of "ſalvation by deputy, and are intitled to all the privileges "of the moſt extenſive faith by another's act? By the "baptiſmal

" baptiſmal ceremony they commence true believers at " once, and are made heirs of heaven, you know, by " the faith of their bondſmen; whilſt as yet they have " not the leaſt ſhare or ſymptom of underſtanding them- " ſelves, and may in all poſſibility never live to attain " one; and which, if they had at the time, I know not " yet, how they could well give a rational aſſent by " proxy. Yet ſuch is the pleaſure and ordinance of God " himſelf in this point." To all this Mr. *Mole* replies, 'I do not wonder, that our author was for looking into 'life and practice on this occaſion, when what he wanted 'to find, was not to be met with in the ſcriptures. It is 'the principle of proteſtants, and rational believers, to 'look into the ſcriptures, as the ſole rule of their faith 'and practice, and not into the life and practice of any 'men living for their religion; as well knowing the very 'great difference of that, which is contained in the one, 'from what paſſes for ſuch in the other.'

This is plainly giving up infant-baptiſm, as an unſcriptural thing, and declaring that, tho' it paſſes ſo generally among Chriſtians for a religious rite; yet it is not contained in the Bible, but is greatly different from that, which is there preſcribed. And hence it is very eaſy to diſcern, what conduct ought to be expected from Mr. *Mole*, and others under ſuch convictions, if they would make the ſcriptures the ſole rule of their faith and practice, as he ſays, it is the principle of proteſtants and rational believers to do. Beſides, as Infidels and others are moſt ready to form their conceptions of Chriſtianity from what they obſerve in the life and practice of its profeſſors, hence alſo ariſes an additional motive for their reformation in the caſe of baptiſm, which is very evident from what he adds in theſe words. 'And as our author, who 'uſually picks up ſome ſhreds and broken pieces of ſcrip- 'ture, which either of themſelves, or with a little art, 'are made to carry ſome ſound, tho' that be all, in his 'favour,' [*a practice too much like what our Pædobaptiſts themſelves in their controverſies with us are guilty of*] 'has 'not practiſed that method upon this occaſion; I do not 'ſee, what the chriſtian religion, or the rational believers 'of it, have further to do with theſe abſurdities, which 'he has ventured to charge them with, than to diſown 'and diſavow them, as they very well may.' How Mr. *Mole* can think ſo, I know not; for I am ſure it muſt appear with a very ill grace till they are reformed, and

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have wholly laid aſide thoſe *egregious follies, abſurdities*, and unſcriptural practices, becauſe they muſt otherwiſe appear manifeſtly inconſiſtent with themſelves. Beſides, it will give Infidels too much cauſe to reproach them with being inſincere, either in what they do, or in what they ſay; and whether that will be any credit or ſervice to themſelves, or the chriſtian religion, it behoves them ſeriouſly to conſider. 'For, *ſays* Mr. *Mole*, where ſhall 'we find in the word of God any mention of deputies, 'or bondſmen, or proxies, in the matters of ſalvation?' Certainly none at all. No, nor yet of *infants being clad with pureneſs and perfection in baptiſm*, or of their being *Chriſtians, and federally holy before baptiſm*, intitling them to baptiſm. On the contrary, we are therein aſſured, that even the righteouſneſs of *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*, would avail ſo little for any beſides themſelves, that they ſhould deliver neither ſon nor daughter, ſo much as from temporal evils, and much leſs from thoſe which are future; becauſe God affirms, *Ezek.* xiv. 12—20, *they ſhall but deliver their own ſouls by their righteouſneſs*. And how then can any Chriſtians ſo vainly pretend, that the faith, obedience, and holineſs of parents, ſhall be imputed to their deſcendants through all generations; ſo as to juſtify them in the neglect of the poſitive appointments of God, as much deſigned, and according to the nature and reaſon of their inſtitution, equally as neceſſary for them all, as for their parents at firſt? And moreover, what ſignifies all their pretended *federal holineſs*, and *faith derived from parents*, conſtituting them *holy Chriſtians*, and intitling them to *baptiſm*, or that *purity and perfection*, which they ſuppoſe to be conferred in baptiſm? We have no ſuch ridiculous and abſurd notions in ſcripture; 'and, 'as *Mr.* Mole *ſays*, if they *are not there, what have we* 'to do with them? Or how can they be ſaid to belong 'to *Chriſtianity?*' And as this Infidel's objection, deſigned by him to expoſe Chriſtianity, is entirely founded upon thoſe opinions and practices amongſt Chriſtians, which are no part of the chriſtian religion; ſo it muſt afford the Baptiſt churches no ſmall ſatisfaction to find, that they are no ways concerned in it. For, as Mr. *Mole* further obſerves; 'We ſhould be apt to form an advantage-'ous opinion of the beauty of a perſon, when we find 'that thoſe, who have endeavoured to decry it, have done 'it by keeping us from the ſight of the original, and pre-'ſenting us only with falſe copies. It may be ſome de-'cree of credit to the chriſtian religion to obſerve the

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'moſt wily of its enemies oppoſe it, by falſly aſcribing 'to it, what it never taught, and feigning abſurdities, 'which are no where to be found in it. Men never more 'ſhew the weakneſs, or that themſelves feel the weakneſs 'of the cauſe, which they eſpouſe, than when they are 'reduced to the method of miſrepreſenting what they op-'poſe. Our author has gathered a heap of abſurdities, 'as it is very eaſy to do, from ſome modern formula's of 'religious doctrines, or the modern practice of ſome reli-'gious ſocieties, which are for the moſt part full of them; 'and falſly charged them upon Chriſtianity. But what-'ever he is for looking to, I own, I am for looking to the 'law and to the teſtimony, and letting life and practice 'alone upon this occaſion; as knowing it to be a com-'mon thing with thoſe who look to them, to take the 'precept or practice of man for the pleaſure and ordi-'nance of God himſelf in any point.'

Sad and diſmal indeed is the defection from real Chriſtianity, and there is too much truth in this concluſion; for which reaſon Mr. *Mole* ought to think, that *looking to the law and to the teſtimony* in relation to baptiſm, without a ſtrict conformity in practice, will avail nothing. And therefore till our Pædobaptiſt brethren ſhall think fit to lay aſide thoſe human appointments, and reform their practice; they make it abſolutely neceſſary for ſome to hold out a light of warning, and direction upon every ſuitable occaſion, as I have now once more endeavoured to do, that perſons may not miſtake the precepts and practice of men for the pleaſure and ordinance of God himſelf in this point.

As Mr. *Mole*'s Reply to this Infidel's objection ends here, I ſhall follow him no farther than juſt to tranſcribe ſome part of his introduction. And if the rules there laid down had always been carefully attended to by Chriſtians, and they had governed themſelves accordingly, we ſhould have been ſo far from having any controverſy about infant-baptiſm, that we ſhould never once have heard the name of it. He begins his anſwer thus:

'It is much to be wiſhed, that, in all inquiries about 'the chriſtian religion, that only ſhould be conſidered as 'ſuch, and come into the queſtion, which lies originally 'in the ſacred writings of the New Teſtament. For 'Chriſtianity as it is there laid down, and as it has been 'ſince eſtabliſhed in the various writings and laws of men, 'are different things, and very wide of one another:

'To intereſt Chriſtianity, not in what Chriſt, but in 'what men have made it, and to direct our inquiries, and 'determine our ſentiments about it from theſe later 'gloſſes, is much the ſame thing; as if we were to judge 'of the nature and meaning of the law of *Moſes* from the 'falſe interpretations and ſpurious additions, with which 'the Phariſees had corrupted it: which, however they 'went under the name of the *Jewiſh* religion, very wide-'ly differed from it; as what the ſyſtems and formula's of 'many modern churches ſet forth for the chriſtian reli-'gion, does differ from what is truly ſuch.

'Nothing ſhews more weakneſs than to receive things 'ſo different as one and the ſame, or wickedneſs than 'knowing that difference to repreſent them as the ſame. 'For whatever is called Chriſtianity, that only is deſerv-'edly eſteemed ſo, which lies in the ſcriptures; and that 'is a very vain objection againſt the true doctrine of 'Chriſt, which is drawn from it, as it lies in the moſt 'authoriſed ſyſtems and compoſitions of men.

'And in ſtating the doctrine of Chriſtianity, it is 'ſcarcely conſiſtent with the juſtice that is due to it, or 'the ſincerity with which our inquiries about it ought to 'be conducted, to ſelect a few ſcattered ſentences from 'the ſcriptures, and conſider them as intire and inde-'pendent propoſitions: ſince ſo detached they may be 'eaſily made to expreſs a meaning different from the true 'one, or even quite contrary to it; which can only be 'learnt by viewing them in the connection with thoſe 'diſcourſes, from which they are taken, and conſidering 'the purpoſe, to which the ſpeaker or writer applies 'them.

'Nor is it the likelieſt way to give a fair account of 'the doctrine of the ſcriptures, if leaving the places, in 'which it is moſt fully and plainly declared, we form 'a ſyſtem founded on obſcure and difficult paſſages; 'and preſume to determine the ſenſe and meaning of 'them arbitrarily and at pleaſure, without any regard to 'the view of the ſpeaker, or to the argument of his diſ-'courſe, or to any other places, wherein his meaning is 'more plainly expreſſed by himſelf, and more eaſily to be 'diſcovered by us.

'In interpreting the words, or repreſenting the ſenti-'ments of any other writers, we never make uſe of ſuch 'methods as theſe; or think, we have any right to uſe 'them: and if we did, whatever we might eſteem our-

'ſelves,

' ſelves, we ſhould hardly with others paſs for fair inter-
' preters. And why ſhould ſuch methods be taken, or al-
' lowed, in repreſenting the ſenſe of the ſacred writings;
' which are eſteemed miſrepreſentations in the caſe of
' all other writings, and reckoned highly injurious to
' them?'

SECT. V.

Remarks on Dr. Doddridge's *Letters.*

I COME now to examine Dr. *Doddridge*'s Anſwer to the ſame objection, and ſhall alſo therein apply many paſſages of his letters to the ſubject in debate. He begins after this manner:

9 ' There yet remains to be conſidered the argument
' you draw from infant-baptiſm, which you apprehend
' would be very abſurd, if it were not ſuppoſed to be at-
' tended with ſuch a communication of the ſpirit, as that
' which is now in debate between us,' which he thus ex-preſſes as the ſenſe of his author. [1] ' And finally, that if
' faith were built upon any other foundation, it would
' be utterly abſurd to pray for its increaſe; (page 10) and
' that infant-baptiſm, here taken for granted to be a di-
' vine inſtitution, would on any other ſcheme be unjuſtifi-
' able and unintelligible. (page 69) Theſe, Sir, are (ſo far
' as I can find) the grand foundations, on which you build
' the doctrine I am now oppoſing.'

But whether upon the doctor's own, and the common principles of his party, at whoſe requeſt this third letter was written, there be not too much ground given for the enemies of revelation to make ſuch ſuppoſitions, and propound ſuch queſtions, it behoves them all ſeriouſly to conſider; tho', even without thoſe ſuppoſitions, I have clearly enough ſhewn, that infant-baptiſm, as their ſprinkling is falſly called, is a very *abſurd* thing: and moreover, it is it ſeems *the grand foundation* which gives Infidels a handle to ſcoff and deride it, and to caſt the greateſt reproach and contempt upon the chriſtian name. And of this, by the following words, the doctor himſelf appears to be ſufficiently ſenſible. " Can a man, ſay you, be

 " baptized

9 Third Letter, p. 54. [1] Ibid. p. 30.

" baptized into a rational religion?" (by which I ſuppoſe ' you mean, can that religion be rational, of which in- ' fant-baptiſm is a part?') This thought, and the very words alſo, the doctor ſeems to have taken *from the ingenious Oxford Reply*; and they as plainly ſhew, that in the doctor's apprehenſion, Infidels may take occaſion from thence, to repreſent Chriſtianity, as a childiſh irrational thing, which is indeed what the author [2] ' endeav- ' ours to evince, by looking a little into life and practice ' upon the occaſion, by tracing this faith to its known ' original, and pointing directly to the great root whence,' *he ſays*, ' all our religious impreſſions notoriouſly ſpring.' And [3] ' will help us to a juſt and uniform account of its ' whole nature, whilſt it points readily back to its ſource ' of baptiſm.' And hence, in agreement with his title, he ſeems [4] ' fully perſuaded, that the judging at all of re- ' ligious matters is not the proper province of reaſon, or ' indeed an affair where ſhe has any concern. . . . . Your ' boaſted rational faith, *ſays he*, is what I would fain ' ſhew you to be a falſe, unwarranted notion of your own, ' and without the leaſt ground to ſupport it, either in na- ' ture or revelation. I mean, that your aſſent to revealed ' truths ſhould be founded upon the conviction of your ' underſtanding.' And therefore he adds, [5] ' It is impoſ- ' ſible, ſurely, when we conſider to whom we muſt aſ- ' cribe them, that any ſuch abſurd ſchemes can any long- ' er be ſuppoſed, that we can ever imagine, that the great ' author and finiſher of our faith ſhould have contrived ' us an irrational one, to be afterwards ſuperſeded, or ' even confirmed by a rational one.'

The reaſoning of this writer in theſe paſſages is agreeable to what Dr. *Doddridge* ſays, as follows, [6] ' For the il- ' luſtration of this, you muſt give me leave to remind ' you, that both the moſaic and chriſtian diſpenſations ' have been much miſrepreſented, in conſequence of ' mens taking their notions of them, rather from the ' conduct of their profeſſors, than from the inſtitutes of ' their reſpective founders.' And according to our Lord's own metaphors, Mat. vii. 16—20. *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thiſtles?* How can we expect it ſhould be otherwiſe? But is it not greatly to be lamented, that the beſt, moſt holy, moſt excellent, and moſt perfect religion,

[2] *Chriſtianity not founded, &c.* p. 9. [3] Ibid. p. 10. [4] p. 7. [5] p. 10. [6] Firſt Letter, p. 13.

ligion, which ever appeared in the world; a religion in itſelf every way worthy of God, and fit for men, every way ſalutary and beneficial to the virtuous and good, ſhould, by the unwarrantable additions, alterations, and unſcriptural practices of its profeſſors, and in ſome meaſure to their own ſhame and confuſion, be thus expoſed to the contempt, and deriſion of its avowed enemies, in theſe words?

[7] "Where is reaſon concerned, when babes accept the "terms of ſalvation by deputy, and are intitled to all the "privileges of the moſt extenſive faith by another's act? "By the baptiſmal ceremony they commence true be- "lievers at once, and are made heirs of heaven, you "know, by the faith of their bondſmen." (page 9.) 'And to the ſame purpoſe, in your 69th page,' "The "merits of the moſt finiſhed conviction are already "theirs by imputation, *&c.*"

This is all that the doctor quotes from this writer's objection on the head of baptiſm, but if my readers turn back to page 14. they will there ſee it more at large: tho' to this the doctor replies, very honeſtly indeed, but in ſuch a manner, as if he was conſcious, that his own practice of infant-ſprinkling was alſo indefenſible. For he ſays, 'Now 'here, Sir, I am obliged to ſay, that if there be any 'form of baptiſm in the chriſtian world, which juſtifies 'ſuch inferences and ſuch a manner of ſpeaking, I am 'extremely ſorry for it. But I am very confident, the 'ſcripture teaches nothing of this kind;' [*no, nor yet the doctor's own method and pleas for infant-baptiſm, any more than thoſe of our eſtabliſhed church, the kirk of* Scotland, *or the church of* Rome.] 'And,' *as he very juſtly obſerves*, 'it is by that, [*viz. the ſcripture*] and not by the 'rubrick [*or cuſtoms*] of any particular church, whether 'Popiſh or Proteſtant, that the merits of this cauſe are 'to be tried.' 'Nor, *as he elſewhere aſſerts*, [8] is this po- 'ſition only inconſiſtent with the pertinency of any rea- 'ſoning whatſoever, but particularly inconſiſtent with 'that footing on which you profeſs to place Chriſtianity, 'when its rational proofs are [*attacked or*] given up.'

But the doctor proceeds thus, 'I cannot ſee, how any 'ſponſor, whether he be, or be not a parent, can pre- 'tend to anſwer for a child, that he ſhall believe, or obey 'the goſpel: Nor does the bringing children to baptiſm, 'by

[7] Third Letter, p. 55. [8] Firſt Letter, p. 10.

'by any means imply it.' Surely the doctor had forgotten the rubric of our eſtabliſhed church, which poſitively aſſerts it, as much as he had forgotten himſelf immediately after, when he tells us; *they are thereby liſted under the banners of Chriſt, ſo far as they could be liſted by the act of another; ſo that they muſt either confirm, or, in effect at leaſt, renounce what was then done.* But certainly the doctor muſt know, there are great numbers of ſober perſons, who neither *confirm* nor *renounce what was then done*; who can never be prevailed upon to join in communion with any Chriſtian ſociety, nor yet openly, and profeſſedly renounce and deny Chriſtianity. And many others there are, who never think, nor concern themſelves at all about the matter. He himſelf tells us of *triflers in religion, ſuch as are in doubt; but not ſolicitous to bring their doubts to an iſſue.* Does the doctor mean any or all of theſe, when he ſpeaks of ſome, *who, in effect, renounce what was done?* Surely he ſhould have aſcertained his meaning a little more clearly, that we might not miſtake him. And does the doctor think, that tho' he gives up the unſcriptural ceremonies practiſed by our eſtabliſhed church, and the kirk of *Scotland*, that he can maintain his own? This he will find impoſſible. Beſides, his own conceſſions are ſo many and ſo ſtrong, that he cannot evade them. [9] He hath 'now riſen [*up to*] plead the in-'jured cauſe of God and virtue, againſt all the wretched 'train of ſophiſtry;' [*which this infidel writer hath laid together*] 'and I will venture to ſay, that the arguments 'and the diſtinctions, by which he confutes [*him*] ſhall 'be [*his*] own anſwer,' for which reaſon I ſhall beſtow very little elſe upon him. He beſpeaks his infidel thus: [1] 'As you take it for granted in the whole of your letter, 'that infant-baptiſm is a chriſtian ordinance, you will al-'ſo allow me to mention it as a common principle, tho' 'little of my argument will depend upon its being ſo.'

Here the doctor is very willing to agree with the Infidel, in taking that for granted, which ought firſt to be proved, but there is a vaſt difference between them; for the Infidel may be thought excuſable enough in doing ſo, becauſe, as he does not believe the ſcriptures to be of divine authority, he cannot be under ſo great obligation to examine them upon that point, as the doctor is. Moreover, as he forms his judgment of Chriſtianity, and likewiſe of the poſitive

[9] Second Letter, p. 56. [1] Firſt Letter, p. 13.

poſitive duties therein required, from what he obſerves to be the belief and practice of Chriſtians in general; how ſhould he be ſuppoſed to think any otherwiſe about it? On the contrary, the doctor acknowledges, [a] ‘That *his buſineſs is with the law*, and *with the teſtimony, by which only the merits of this cauſe are to be tried*, and therefore it is abſolutely inexcuſable in him to practiſe it, and yet evade the proof of it, as he does, by ſaying, ‘What reaſon ‘we have to conclude infant-baptiſm a rite of divine ‘inſtitution, I ſhall not now enquire. It is enough if ‘I ſhew, that admitting it to be ſo, (which I really think ‘it is very reaſonable that we ſhould admit) it by no ‘means implies this abſurd conſequence.’

But to uſe the doctor's own words immediately before, *I am very confident, the ſcripture teaches nothing of this kind; and it is by that, and not by the rubric of any particular church, whether Popiſh or Proteſtant, that the merits of this cauſe are to be tried*, and therefore if we do admit it without any proof from thence, notwithſtanding adult-baptiſm alone is ſo very plainly and clearly taught there; ſo theſe very abſurd, and moſt pernicious conſequences muſt neceſſarily ariſe from it, namely, that the laws of Chriſt in this inſtitution are not much to be regarded; that the wiſeſt and beſt diſpenſation, which was ever given to men by the greateſt law-giver, that ever appeared, and was ſent from God, is ſo very defective, that the imperfections thereof are forced to be ſupplied, according as the various fancies of men ſhall dictate, or ſuggeſt: notwithſtanding one of the moſt eminent *ambaſſadors* of *Chriſt* could, in a ſolemn manner, appeal to God, that he had *not ſhunned to declare unto* his church *all the counſel of God*; *and kept back nothing that was profitable* unto them. *Acts* xx. 20—27; and hath warned us, in the ſtrongeſt terms, not to admit *any other goſpel than that which he had preached*, even tho' it ſhould be brought by himſelf, or by *an angel from heaven*, upon pain of the ſevereſt anathema, *Galat.* i. 6—9.

It may indeed be very reaſonable for the doctor, with all ſuch as practiſe it, to admit it, becauſe otherwiſe their own conſciences muſt condemn them, as much as their own words, and conceſſions do: but what is this to them, who abſolutely deny, there is any reaſon to conclude, that infant-baptiſm is a rite of divine inſtitution; on the contrary, are well perſuaded that there is all the reaſon in the

[a] Third Letter, p. 10.

the world to conclude, it is not? And what will the doctor's admitting it in this manner, ſignify to an Infidel, who muſt thereby ſee it is a mere begging the queſtion; and only taking that for granted, which ought firſt to be clearly proved from that very rule, by which Chriſtians pretend to walk, and to be guided in all matters of religion. This the doctor never attempts, for in all his letters, where he occaſionally mentions it, he takes it for granted, as I have already ſhewn in ſome, and might add more inſtances. The doctor imagines indeed, that 'other ends 'might be anſwered by it, valuable enough to juſtify the wiſdom 'of the ordinance;' but let it be conſidered, as the chriſtian rule aſſures us, 1 *Cor.* i. ii. iii. That God *will deſtroy the wiſdom of the wiſe, and will bring to nothing the underſtanding of the prudent. Where is the wiſe? where is the ſcribe? where is the diſputer of this world? hath not God made fooliſh the wiſdom of this world? Becauſe the fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than men; and the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than men. For ye ſee your calling, brethren, how that not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble* are called. *But God hath choſen the fooliſh things of the world to confound the wiſe; and God hath choſen the weak things of the world, to confound the mighty; and the baſe things of the world, and things which are deſpiſed, hath God choſen, yea, and things which are not* [eſteemed] *to bring to nought things that are; that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence. That your faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God. Not the wiſdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought. Which things alſo we ſpeak, not in the words which man's wiſdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghoſt teacheth; comparing ſpiritual things with ſpiritual.* Whereby St. *Paul according to the grace of God given unto* him, *as a wiſe maſter builder, laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, ſilver, precious ſtones, wood, hay, ſtubble: every mans work ſhall be made manifeſt; for the day ſhall declare it, becauſe it ſhall be revealed* by *fire; and the fire ſhall try every man's work, of what ſort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he ſhall receive a reward. If any man's work ſhall be burnt, he ſhall ſuffer loſs: but he himſelf ſhall be ſaved; yet ſo, as by fire. Let no man deceive himſelf: If any man among you ſeemeth to be wiſe in this world,*

world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. 1 Cor. i. 19. to ch. iii. 21. I shall leave the application of these scriptures to the doctor, because, with a long train of mays and may be's, he says, 'other ends might be answered by it, 'valuable enough to justify the wisdom of the ordinance: 'As for instance, hereby parents may give a public token 'of their faith in Christianity, and their consequent de-'sire that their children may partake of its benefits, and 'answer its demands: hereby they may solemnly declare 'their resolution to train them up in the institutions of 'our blessed master, and their resignation of them to the 'disposal of divine providence, if God should see fit early to remove them: This also may remain, throughou 'all generations, as a memorial of the tenderness which 'our Lord shewed to little children, and of the perpetuity 'of that covenant, the efficacy of which reaches from 'one generation to another: and to add no more, it may 'lay a foundation for affectionate addresses to the children 'afterwards, as being already listed under the banners of 'Christ, so far as they could be listed by the act of another; 'so that they must either confirm, or, in effect at least, 'renounce what was then done.'

But how should they renounce that, in which they never engaged themselves? As they never consented to the act, can they be at all bound by it? Besides, the practice of these things, which are no where appointed, or required in the word of God, but are only the fancies and contrivances of men, mere human traditions, are attended with this ill effect, that the commandments of God are thereby made void, *Matt.* xv. 2—9. *Mark* vii. 2—9. By these thousands of sincere Christians are kept from submitting to Christ's own institution of baptism, to which they would otherwise have yielded themselves, in the uprightness of their hearts; if their minds had not been forestalled with this error, their judgments misled, and their obedience hereby prevented. This is the great, I must not say *valuable, end*, which is answered by infant-baptism; and in this they, who practise it, have no just cause to glory, as this *wily Infidel* has now shewn them. And therefore, without entering into a more particular *discussion* of the doctor's *valuable ends*, 'I must' *in his own words upon another point*, 'take leave to premise

'one preliminary; which is, that the queſtion we are '[3] debating, is not by any means to be decided by human 'authority. I am very ſenſible, Sir, *ſays the doctor*, that 'ſome eminent divines of the *Roman* communion, and 'the eſtabliſhed church at home, as well as among our 'Nonconformiſts, have, in the zeal and humility of 'their hearts, expreſſed themſelves in a manner which 'cannot be defended, and thereby have given too plauſi-'ble an occaſion for [*this Infidel's*] dangerous and fatal 'miſrepreſentations. . . . . But my buſineſs is with the 'law, and with the teſtimony; and where theſe holy 'and excellent men have not ſpoken according to that 'rule, I cannot believe that celeſtial light to have been 'in them, or ſuppoſe their minds under the guidance of 'that ſpirit, whom, tho' by ill-judged methods, it was 'undoubtedly their ſincere and affectionate deſire to glo-'rify. Taking the matter therefore, as the ſcripture 'repreſents it, it will be very eaſy to ſhew,' that there is not the leaſt foundation there for the practice of infant-baptiſm, to which this paſſage of the doctor's may be juſtly applied; the truth of which is, I think, evident enough from his anſwering this writer in the manner he has done. For he hath no where quoted a ſingle text of ſcripture for it, but whereſoever he mentions it, or in the leaſt glances at it, he always, with the infidel whom he oppoſes, takes it for granted, *as a common principle, a thing general acknowledged*; which, as I before obſerved, is a mere begging the queſtion. He muſt know, it hath always been oppoſed by thoſe of our perſuaſion, as a practice concerning which the ſcripture is totally ſilent, and therefore, this his neglect, if he knows there is ſcripture for it; or elſe his practice, if he knows there is not, muſt be abſolutely inexcuſable. And,

As to the many writings, which have been publiſhed in behalf of this unſcriptural practice, I may very juſtly ſay of them, as the doctor does of thoſe for infidelity. [4] 'Sad indeed is the drudgery our brethren muſt go thro' 'in reading ſuch authors, . . . but the confirmation which 'their faith may receive, by the very efforts made to 'overthrow it, [*our practice, and to eſtabliſh their own*] will, 'I hope, in many inſtances, be a ſufficient reward. And 'as theſe pieces, eſpecially in the hand of ſecond rate 'writers, contain little more than a confident and un-

'wearied

[3] Third Letter, p. 9, 10. [4] Firſt Letter, p. 46, 47.

'wearied repetition of the ſame objections, [*and arguments,*] which have been anſwered perhaps many ſcores 'and hundreds of times, without taking any notice of 'thoſe replies; (which, whether it be owing to the 'learning, or modeſty of the authors, I will not under-'take to ſay;) one who is acquainted with theſe contro-'verſies will be able to diſpatch large volumes in a little 'time, and will ſee that many of them need no new 'anſwers. All which will be circumſtances of ſome 'conſolation under ſo tedious a taſk.' And as he ſays elſewhere, [5] 'Anſwers will be ſuggeſted, with thoſe 'objections; and he will ſoon be weary of hearing ſuch 'poor unſatisfactory things, as moſt of the cavils of In-'fidels [*or Pædobaptiſts*] are. And here again, the good ha-'bits, and diſpoſitions formed in his mind, will be of 'great ſervice. He will perceive, that Chriſtianity [*with 'adult-baptiſm*] wears ſo favourable an aſpect, and opens 'upon him ſo fine a proſpect, that he will not hunt after 'objections againſt it; as a man is not ſtudious to find a 'flaw in writings, by which he ſtands intitled to the re-'verſion of ſome noble eſtate: and when they accident-'ally ſtart up in his way, he will ſoon ſee, that many of 'them are grounded on notorious falſhood, and are in 'themſelves deſpicably mean; eſpecially when ſet againſt 'the great arguments for it, of which he is already poſ-'ſeſſed.'

But to return to the doctor's anſwer, 'all theſe valuable 'purpoſes, and many more, *ſays he*, may be anſwered 'by infant-baptiſm.' And becauſe the doctor is a little ſparing here, I will take the liberty to enumerate them in his own words elſewhere. [6] 'Nevertheleſs, for the far-'ther illuſtration of the ſubject, I ſhall freely tell you, 'how I apprehend the caſe to ſtand, with regard to the 'generality of the common people, who are in good ear-'neſt in the profeſſion of religion; readily acknowledg-'ing, tho' with great grief, that there are thouſands and 'ten thouſands, who wear the name of Chriſtians as by 'meer accident, without at all conſidering its meaning, 'reaſon, or obligation; a caſe very conſiſtent with the 'poſſibility of their being better informed, and rationally 'convinced.' . . . . . [7] 'That this is the caſe of ſo many, 'I very readily acknowledge, that, thro' a negligence, 'for which I fear a multitude of parents and miniſters

[5] Ibid. p. 21, 22. [6] Firſt Letter, p. 12. [7] Ibid. p. 23.

'have a terrible account to render before God. . . . . By
'far the greater part of profeſſing Chriſtians have proba-
'bly no better reaſon to give for their religion, than that
'they were early baptized [*he ſhould have ſaid rantized*]
'into it, and have been trained up in ſome of its exter-
'nal forms. Far from being inſtructed in its evidences,
'they are hardly taught its doctrines, or its precepts; or
'ſuperficially learn them from thoſe, who do not them-
'ſelves ſeem to be in good earneſt concerned about the one
'or the other. The fatal conſequence is too plain. The
'corruptions of nature, abetted by the force of evil ex-
'amples, prevail againſt them; and they are early plung-
'ed into ſuch licentious practices, that if they ever reflect
'on the moſt evident and expreſs declarations of the word
'of God, they muſt immediately ſee, that they are con-
'demned by it.

'Now there is no reaſon to wonder, if many of this
'ſort of Chriſtians are eaſy proſelytes to infidelity. It
'is no ſurpriſing thing, if a bold jeſt thrown upon ſcrip-
'ture, or a confident ſenſeleſs aſſertion of its falſhood,
'(perhaps from a perſon, on whoſe word hardly any thing
'elſe would be believed,) have with them all the weight
'of a demonſtration. They will be little concerned to
'aſk information, or conſider how objections may be
'anſwered. Thoſe magical words, prieſtcraft, and the
'prejudice of education, ſtun and terrify them. They
'ſubmit as [*his Infidel*] gravely expreſſes it, (page 75.)
"in the impotency and impuberty of a dutiful underſtand-
"ing, in the tractable ſimplicity of unpractiſed reaſon:
"with the obſequious and humble acquieſcence of a babe,
"they ſit down to learn their leſſon" too; 'and their un-
'belief, after they have attained the ſtature of men,
'is juſt as blind and implicit, as the faith of their child-
'hood was.

'This, Sir, is undoubtedly the caſe with many: and you
'cannot but have obſerved, what large companies in the
'free-thinking army are raiſed and enliſted from a-
'mong theſe vagabonds. But the generality of men among
'us, as in every nation, go on thoughtleſsly in the re-
'ligion in which they were educated: hearing the truth
'of it often aſſerted, and perhaps never hearing it con-
'tradicted, they entertain no doubts on the ſubject, but
'grow old in a mere ſpeculative and ineffectual aſſent to
'Chriſtianity. And if their heart at any time ſmite
'them, with the contrariety of their temper and con-

'duct

'duct to the rules which they acknowledge to be divine, 'they ſeek their ſhelter in the hope of making their peace 'with God, (as they commonly expreſs it,) before they 'go out of the world; and perhaps abuſe ſome of the 'nobleſt diſcoveries which the goſpel makes, as an en-'couragement to continue in thoſe ſins and follies, from 'which it was expreſsly deſigned to reclaim them.'

The doctor hath here given us a diſmal, melancholy train of evils indeed, and they are ſuch by his limitation of them, as we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, would not have ſo frequently exiſted, had it not been for infant-baptiſm; becauſe according to him, they ariſe from amongſt thoſe infants, to whom that is ſuppoſed to be adminiſtered; and the numbers of them it ſeems are ſo very great, that *far the greater part of profeſſing Chriſtians have probably no better reaſon to give for their religion*, than that they were early baptized, or rather rantized into it. And ſuch as theſe are they, *who are eaſily led into infidelity*; and whoſe *unbelief*, he ſays, *after they have attained the ſtature of men, is juſt as blind and implicit, as the faith of their childhood was.* And therefore, if there was a poſſibility of giving them faith, and making them Chriſtians in that way, it would have been much better for ſuch unhappy creatures to have had nothing at all done to them, becauſe, as the apoſtle aſſures us, *it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.* 2 *Pet.* ii. 21. compared with *Heb.* vi. 4. and ch. x. 26—31. Beſides it would be wiſeſt, and ſafeſt, and beſt for their parents and miniſters themſelves, not only becauſe God hath no where required it, and conſequently no law of his can be broken; but alſo becauſe they would not be in quite ſo much danger of having *a terrible account to render before God* for this, as the doctor fears they will for their education.

But to proceed: the doctor in many parts of thoſe anſwers, as well as in the following words, ſeems not only to contradict himſelf, but the common principles of his party alſo; and has given us a moſt ſubſtantial reaſon, why neither baptiſm, nor any thing elſe inſtead of it, ſhould ever be adminiſtered to infants, becauſe he ſays, 'It will by no means follow from hence, that this rite 'affects the eternal ſtate of the child; or that, if it did 'affect it, there muſt be ſuch an extraordinary communi-'cation of the ſpirit to it, as you ſuppoſe. You allow,

'in

'in expreſs terms, that there is no act of the child at all, 'and that it believes nothing. How this conſiſts with its 'having a perfect faith wrought in its mind at once, is not 'poſſible for me to conceive.' The purport of this third letter, and the manner, in which thoſe ſentences are introduced, ſeems to evince, that the doctor allows the negatives; and therefore I ſhall be glad to know for what ends, and upon what grounds, he would pretend to baptize a child. It cannot be to *confer grace*, or thereby to infuſe that *pureneſs and perfection*, with which the kirk of *Scotland* imagines a child *is clad in baptiſm*, for this *ſudden* and *irreſiſtable* agency of the ſpirit, [8] 'by which the moſt finiſhed 'conviction *becomes* theirs;' *as* 'by the baptiſmal cere-'mony they commence true believers at once, and are 'made heirs of heaven, and millions actually ſaved upon 'the ſtrength of the mere ceremony;' and what elſe this infidel writer ſays about the ſpirit's agency, the doctor warmly oppoſes, and calls [9] 'a ſcheme *ſo* apparently con-'trary to fact; and in theory ſo wild [*as no man can eaſily*] 'believe, it could be ſeriouſly propoſed by any *man*, who 'enjoyed the uſe of his reaſon: or that [*his author*] meant 'any thing by it, unleſs it were to expoſe Chriſtianity.' And he confidently aſſerts, that *the ſcripture teaches nothing of this kind*; and is *extremely ſorry that any form of baptiſm in the chriſtian world, juſtifies ſuch inferences, and ſuch a manner of ſpeaking*. It cannot be, becauſe the child *is a believer, and federally holy*, as it derives faith from its parents; becauſe, as he pleads and urgeth the Infidel's own words, he ſeems alſo with him to allow, *that it believes nothing*; or if he thinks it does, I am ſure he can give no proof of it. It cannot be to deliver the infant from eternal damnation, becauſe he ſays, *This rite will by no means affect the eternal ſtate of the child*. But he muſt know, that theſe have been ſome of the common pretences of his party, who have often aſſerted, that *infants dying unbaptized are damned, that there are ſuch in hell a ſpan long: and that God cuts them off, as men deſtroy young foxes; becauſe from their ravenous nature, they are aſſured that they will become hurtful, if ſuffered to grow up*. Such horrid things as theſe have been urged by ſome, and have appeared in print formerly; but I believe the miniſters of his denomination, as well as others, are grown more moderate

[8] *Chriſtianity not founded, &c.* p. 9. and 69. [9] Second Letter, p. 49.

moderate now: tho' time was, when they would not rantize a child, whoſe father or mother, or both, were not in their communion; becauſe in ſuch a caſe they thought the infant could not have faith. But I know a certain miniſter of theirs, who hath boaſted that *he was very charitable towards little infants*, becauſe *he would not refuſe to baptize a child; if there was in it but the faith of the great grandfather, or if the great grandfather of it was but a believer*, as he choſe to expreſs himſelf to two miniſters of our perſuaſion, who have diverted themſelves enough with the folly of it. How all theſe things are conſiſtent with *a child's being regenerated, and clad with pureneſs and perfection in baptiſm, and having a perfect faith wrought in its mind at once*; or what proof can be given, that there is the leaſt truth in any of theſe wild fancies, is beyond my ability to conceive; and I think the doctor had too much reaſon to add, 'I muſt therefore conclude, that 'you meant nothing more than to expoſe this practice, as 'you elſewhere expoſe perſecution, by intimating that it 'cannot be defended, unleſs your doctrine were to be 'granted; whence you are ſure, every thinking man, 'who yields to this part of your argument, will conclude, 'that it cannot be defended at all.'

Such expreſſions as theſe, as well as the following paſſage, might have been becomingly applied and made uſe of by one of our perſuaſion; but neither this, nor the following paſſage can appear with a very good grace from the doctor, or any of his party, where he ſays, [1] 'There 'are many other particulars in your letter, about which 'I ſhall have no controverſy with you at all, but ſhall 'willingly leave thoſe deities to plead, whoſe altars you 'have caſt down. The imputation of the faith of ſureties 'to the baptized infant; the neceſſary connection between 'the adminiſtration of that rite, and the communication 'of ſome extraordinary influences of the ſpirit:' [*to which I may juſtly add the whole of that unſcriptural practice*] '.... I confeſs you have rallied with a juſt ſeverity. And 'I am particularly pleaſed with the ſerious air with which 'the raillery on theſe heads is carried, even to the defence 'of fire and faggot in the cauſe of religion; from which I 'preſume, Sir, you apprehend yourſelf to be in no dan-'ger.' But to return:

On the other hand, ſays the doctor, 'It ſeems ſufficient for me here to have ſhewn, that your notion is not 'connected

[1] Second Letter, p. 51.

'connected with Chriſtianity, even allowing infant-bap-
'tiſm to be a part of it.' And on this hand, it ſeems ſufficient for me to have ſhewn, as, I think, I have clearly enough done in my ſupplement, to which I refer my readers; where they will find from a view of all the paſſages of ſcripture, which relate to Chriſt's own inſtitution, that infant-baptiſm is a mere human invention, no way *connected with Chriſtianity*; and that none, who ſtrictly adhere to ſcripture, as the rule of truth, can ever allow it *to be a part of it.* And I join moſt heartily with the doctor in that fervent wiſh, with which he concludes his anſwer to this objection; 'May the time at length come,
'when a zeal for the honour of the goſpel ſhall more ef-
'fectually engage all its miniſters, to adhere to the purity
'both of its doctrines and inſtitutions, and not to over-
'load it with thoſe additions of their own, which furniſh
'its adverſaries with matter of triumph! In the mean
'time, may thoſe adverſaries [*and all Pædobaptiſts of
'every denomination*] conſider, that they are anſwerable to
'God for the impartiality, with which they enquire in-
'to the contents of Chriſtianity, and that they are to
'take their notions of it from the New Teſtament alone!
'which if you, Sir, had been pleaſed to have done, you
'would never have mentioned this argument; nor from
'any thing you could have met with there, could you
'ever have thought of it.'

Since therefore the ſcripture is ſo great a ſtranger to infant-baptiſm, that thoſe, who *take their notions of Chriſtianity from the New Teſtament alone, could never have thought of it*, nor *would ever have mentioned ſuch arguments* about it; why does not Dr. *Doddridge*, who is ſo much eſteemed amongſt the independent Pædobaptiſts, and with whom he has ſo great an influence, in his zeal for the honour of the goſpel, imploy his parts and abilities, and exert the utmoſt of his endeavours, more effectually to engage all his fellow miniſters, and their reſpective congregations, more ſtrictly *to adhere to the purity both of its doctrines and inſtitutions; and not to overload it with thoſe additions of their own, which furniſh its adverſaries with matter of triumph?*

Having thus gone through his whole anſwer to this objection, I ſhall take my leave of him with recommending a few more paſſages of his, which, if duly attended to, may be very uſeful to promote thoſe great and deſirable ends.

'Reaſonably

[2] 'Reaſonably we may deſire, that God would awaken 'our minds to diligence in ſearching after truth; that he 'would preſent the evidence of it before us in a clear and 'convincing light; that he would guard our hearts from 'thoſe corrupt prejudices which might obſtruct its en-'trance into them; and that he would remind us, from 'time to time, of thoſe great religious truths which we 'do believe, with ſuch ſpirit and energy, that our tem-'per of life may, in a ſuitable manner, be influenced by 'the realizing perſuaſion. In ſuch a prayer, methinks, 'every virtuous Deiſt muſt join; as I firmly believe, that 'would men heartily join in it, and act accordingly, they 'would ſoon ceaſe to be deiſts in the negative ſenſe of the 'word. And in proportion to the degree in which we 'ſee evident reaſon to believe the truth of Chriſtianity, 'we may reaſonably pray, that God, by the influences 'of his holy ſpirit on our minds, would give us more 'comprehenſive views of its evidence, and would im-'preſs a more lively ſenſe of its great principles on our 'hearts; that our faith may not be a cold aſſent, but 'powerful in the production of its genuine fruits.'

[3] 'For I can think of nothing ſo rational, as diligently to 'examine the credentials of any thing offered us as a 'meſſage from God, and then humbly to ſubmit to it 'without cavilling and diſputing, when we are ſatisfied 'that it wears the ſtamp of his authority.' [4] 'We 'are therefore humbly and quietly to ſit down, as it 'were, at the feet of the divine teacher; and though 'ſeveral plauſible objections may ariſe in our minds, and 'many things taught may be inconſiſtent with our pre-'conceived prejudices, and with what through their in-'fluence we ſhould have expected, we are to ſuffer 'thoſe prejudices to be over-ruled by ſo high an authority, 'and to acquieſce in this, that the Lord hath ſaid it: 'And this is as really our duty, when he is ſpeaking to 'us by his Meſſengers, as it was theirs when he was ſpeak-'ing immediately to them.'

[5] 'I am ſenſible, Sir, the grand objection againſt all 'theſe reaſonings [*in the light I have placed them*] is taken, 'from the appearance of a virtuous and amiable diſpoſi-'tion in ſome who diſbelieve the [*neceſſity of obeying this 'inſtitution of the*] goſpel, and from the poſſibility that a

[2] Third Letter, p. 53. [3] Ibid p. 46. [4] Third Letter, p. 45. [5] Second Letter, p. 42.

'wrong aſſociation of ideas in others, leading them to 'conclude thoſe things to be contained in the chriſtian 'revelation, which do not indeed belong to it, may engage 'ſome to reject the whole from the apparent abſurdity 'which they ſee in theſe ſpurious, tho' ſolemn, additions 'to it; as for inſtance, in thoſe vaſt tracts of land, in 'which tranſubſtantiation and image-worſhip [*and I may 'alſo add infant-ſprinkling*] are repreſented, not merely 'as conſiſtent with Chriſtianity, but as in a manner eſ-'ſential to it, by thoſe who are its eſtabliſhed teachers, 'and may therefore be preſumed beſt to underſtand it.'

6 'But this ignorance of the particular manner [*how 'and to whom baptiſm is to be applied*] does not, as one 'would imagine ſome apprehended, leave men at liberty 'to aſſert, at random, whatever they pleaſe about it. 'We may reaſonably conclude, that it is not the ſtated 'office of the divine ſpirit to reveal new doctrines, which 'the ſcripture does not teach; for if it were, God would 'undoubtedly, as when he formerly added to prior reve-'lations given to his church, furniſh the perſons to whom 'ſuch diſcoveries were made, with proper credentials to 'authoriſe their report: and if this cannot be proved, 'it ought not to be aſſerted. Nor can we imagine it his 'office, to reveal, by an immediate ſuggeſtion, the doc-'trines already delivered in ſcripture, to thoſe who may 'have daily opportunities of learning them from thence.'

7 'Nay, I apprehend, it muſt follow from theſe princi-'ples, that the very ſuppoſition of a revelation in gene-'ral implies, on the one hand, ſufficiency of evidence to 'every candid enquirer; and on the other, certain di-'vine diſpleaſure againſt the rejecters of it.' *&c.* 8 'And '[*therefore*] I ſhall remit you to a repeated peruſal of that 'ſolid and uſeful [*book, The Holy Bible*] with only this one 'further queſtion; "Whether you do not think there is "ſuch a thing in the human heart, as the counter-part of "the character you deride, an impious propenſity to the "negative, a ſoliciting the diſſent of our own minds, "and an endeavouring to promote our own unbelief?" 'If you think, the will has no remote influence upon the 'underſtanding as to its enquiry into truth, and that cor-'rupt affections never lead a man into error, from which '(had his heart been more upright,) he might eaſily have

'been

6 Third Letter, p. 20. 7 Second Letter, p. 36. 8 Third Letter, p. 59.

'been preſerved, you contradict not only yourſelf, but 'the common ſenſe and experience of mankind; and 'introduce an univerſal fatality, that worſt of monſters, 'which will ſwallow up virtue and religion together, and 'leave the mind an eaſy prey to every error, and to every 'vice, which will owe its cheap victory to the air of ir-'reſiſtibility, with which it makes its appearance.'

SECT. VI.

Remarks on Dr. Leland's *Letters.*

THO' I had intirely finiſhed my deſign in theſe remarks ſometime, before I had the pleaſure of reading Dr. *Leland*'s two letters, in anſwer to *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument*; yet I thought myſelf obliged to join him with his brethren, that I might make good my title of *Remarks on the ſeveral Anſwers, &c.* becauſe thoſe words may be thought to include the doctor's letters, as well as others. For brevity ſake, I ſhall omit many extracts, which might be urged with ſome force; and confine myſelf chiefly to the reply, which he makes to his author's objection concerning infant-baptiſm, avoiding, as much as poſſible, to repeat what I have already urged in anſwer to Mr. *Mole*.

In the ſummary account, which the doctor gives of this writer's Pamphlet, are theſe words. [9] 'He repreſents a 'rational faith, that is, as he himſelf explains it, an 'aſſent to revealed truths founded upon the convic-'tion of the underſtanding, as a falſe and unwarrantable 'notion. And therefore ſets himſelf to prove, that in 'the goſpel no appeal to the underſtanding was ever 'made or intended. He talks as if infants were capable 'of faith, before they are capable of exerting one act of 'reaſon; and that the infant's belief anſwers as effectual-'ly all the demands of the goſpel, as that of the firſt 'proficient, and higheſt graduate in divinity. And as he 'explains the firſt beginning of truth to be without rea-'ſon, or any uſe of the underſtanding, ſo he repreſents 'the perſeverance in the faith required in the goſpel, to

 'be

[9] Firſt Letter, p. 9.

'be a blind and fooliſh obſtinacy to a preſent notion, *a diſ-*
'*avowing all future uſe of reaſon for our ſecurity*. . . . He
'declares, that that perſon *beſt enjoys the true and genuine*
'*faith, who never aſked himſelf one ſingle queſtion about it,*
'*and never dealt at all in the evidence of reaſon*. . . . . And
'tho' he obſerves, that we are *ordered to be taught the*
'*faith in our childhood*, yet he expreſsly affirms, that faith
'and religion *can never be a thing that is to be taught*, and
'that it *muſt needs be ſomething that does not require time to*
'*attain*.' '[1] That the chriſtian faith cannot be a rational
'thing, [*becauſe*] that *we are ordered to be baptized into*
'*it*. This he repreſents as *the known original of faith, the*
'*great root whence all our religious impreſſions notoriouſly*
'*ſpring*, and that, *by the baptiſmal ceremony*, men com-
'mence true believers *at once*: And this, even *whilſt they*
'*have not the leaſt ſhare or ſymptom of underſtanding*. He
'ſeems to lay great ſtreſs upon this, and returns to it in
'ſeveral parts of his pamphlet.'

This, I think, is all, except one line, that the doctor hath any where cited from this author's objection about infant-baptiſm; whether becauſe it appeared to him too difficult to anſwer it, and vindicate the practice therein expoſed, or from an unwillingneſs in expreſs terms to give it up and diſavow it, I ſhall not pretend to ſay. For, as to what he ſays about the education of children, I take that to be no plea at all for infant-baptiſm; ſince the children of thoſe, who oppoſe that practice, may have the ſame advantage of a chriſtian education. Beſides which, they are in no danger of having their minds prejudiced againſt the truth by ſuch human traditions, to which the others are expoſed, and is the true reaſon, why many ſincere perſons are kept from yielding a perſonal and voluntary obedience to Chriſt in his own appointed way. However, this is ſufficient to ſhew, that if the practice of our Pædobaptiſt brethren be not a ſtumbling block in the way of Infidels; yet it certainly gives them a very great handle to expoſe, and is now made the occaſion of their *ſneering* at and deriding, Chriſtianity, as if infant-ſprinkling was really a part of it, and contained in the New Teſtament: tho' as the doctor expreſſes himſelf,

'[2] Nothing can be more contrary to plain and undeni-
'able fact, more contradictory in all its parts, and more
'evidently ſubverſive of itſelf, than the ſcheme here ad-
'vanced

[1] Ibid. p. 28. [2] Second Letter, p. 55.

'vanced by this writer. I am ſenſible this Gentleman 'will be ready to ſneer at the charge. For undoubtedly 'he does not intend that the world ſhould look upon it as 'a thing which he himſelf believes. It is the true ſcrip-'tural and revealed account of the matter, and the ſcrip-'ture alone muſt anſwer for it. And therefore the more 'contradictions are proved upon this ſcheme, the better 'it will anſwer his deſign, which is to expoſe Chriſtianity 'to the deriſion and contempt of mankind.' And elſe-where,

[3] 'I do not think there can be a more complete ſcheme 'of abſurdity and enthuſiaſm, than what this Gentleman 'here puts upon us for the true ſcripture account of faith, 'and of the ſpirit, and of the nature of goſpel-evidence; 'which he undoubtedly intends for expoſing the ſacred 'writings.' [4] 'But if it be made appear, that this is all 'groſs miſrepreſentation; that the account he is pleaſed to 'give us [*of baptiſm*] is as contrary to ſcripture, as it is to 'reaſon and common ſenſe, then the contradictions and 'abſurdities are to be charged upon the author himſelf,' [*or upon thoſe churches, whoſe corrupt practices furniſh him with ſo juſt an occaſion for it, and they are*] 'juſtly 'accountable for them. And this attempt of his muſt 'only paſs for a proof of his readineſs to take any methods, 'how unfair and diſingenuous ſoever, to expoſe the reli-'gion of Jeſus.'

The doctor's reply to all his objection on the head of baptiſm, tho' not in direct and expreſs words, is yet, in my judgment, a clear and manifeſt giving up their prac-tice in this particular, as an unſcriptural thing; for he ſays,

[5] 'The ſtrength of his argument here depends upon 'the ſneering account he gives of the nature of baptiſm. 'But there needs no more to ſhow the weakneſs and fal-'lacy of it, than to ſtate the caſe of baptiſm according to 'the goſpel notion of it; in which alone Chriſtianity is 'concerned. At the firſt founding of the chriſtian 'church, the firſt work was to bring perſons over to the 'faith of the goſpel, by ſetting before them the evidence 'whereby it was confirmed; and then, when they were 'once converted to the faith, they were, according to 'the divine appointment, to be baptized, which was a 'ſolemn

[3] Firſt Letter, p. 14. [4] Second Letter, p. 55. [5] Firſt Letter, p. 29

'ſolemn taking upon them a profeſſion of the chriſtian 'religion, and a bringing themſelves under the moſt ſa- 'cred obligations to obey its laws. And there is nothing 'in this, but what is perfectly conſiſtent with faith's being 'founded upon good and rational evidence; nor can ſo 'much as a ſhadow of an argument be brought from it 'to prove, that becauſe perſons were ordered to be bap- 'tized after they believed, therefore they did not, or 'could not, uſe their reaſon or intellectual faculty to lead 'them into that belief.'

All this is every way agreeable to the practice of the Baptiſt churches at this day, but is not conſiſtent with Pædobaptiſm. For this true *ſtating the caſe of baptiſm according to the goſpel notion of it, in which alone* the doctor affirms *Chriſtianity is concerned*, is an abſolute excluſion of every other way of proceeding in relation to that ordinance, as no part of Chriſtianity: ſo that infant-ſprinkling, by the doctor's confeſſion, muſt be an unchriſtian practice, becauſe according to what he here gives us as *the goſpel notion of baptiſm*, there cannot *ſo much as a ſhadow of an argument be brought frome thence to prove it.* And therefore I heartily wiſh, that our eſtabliſhed church, and that of *Scotland*, may be herein reformed; and ſettled upon this true ſcripture plan according to the divine appointment, and thereby become proof againſt the attacks of Infidels.

But if the aſſertion of the kirk of *Scotland*, that *the uſe of underſtanding, and faith, is not requiſite in all thoſe that receive this ſacrament*; or if the laſt clauſe of the xxvii article of the church of *England* were true, that *the baptiſm of young children is in any wiſe to be retained in the church, as moſt agreeable with the inſtitution of Chriſt*: ſurely the doctor might have proved it from Chriſt's inſtitution, and not have been forced to make uſe only of mere human ſuppoſitions, inſtead of plain ſcripture, for the vindication of his practice, and the beſt ſupport of his own cauſe, as he does in what follows. 'Our author is 'ſenſible of this, and therefore he lays the ſtreſs of his 'argument upon the baptiſm of infants, which he re- 'preſents in his own way. Let us therefore argue with 'him upon the SUPPOSITION, that it was the will of 'God, that not only adult perſons, who themſelves em- 'braced the chriſtian faith, but that their children too 'ſhould be baptized.'

Had

Had this been the will of God, certainly we ſhould have met with it in his holy word; becauſe the apoſtles did not ſhun to declare unto his church *all the counſel of God, and kept back nothing that was profitable unto them.* Acts xx. 20, 27. Beſides, the order of the kirk of *Scotland* affirms, that 'baptiſm, and the holy ſupper of the 'Lord Jeſus are then rightly miniſtred..... when fur-'ther to them is nothing added, from them nothing di-'miniſhed, and in their practice nothing changed beſides 'the inſtitution of the Lord Jeſus, and practice of his 'holy apoſtles..... And *that* ſuch, as would preſume to 'alter Chriſt's perfect ordinance, ought ſeverely to *be* pu-'niſhed:' and the xiv article of our eſtabliſhed church ſays expreſsly, that 'Voluntary works, beſides, over and 'above God's commandments ... cannot be taught with-'out arrogancy and impiety:' both which may be under-ſtood, as a ſevere cenſure of the doctrine, and practice of infant-baptiſm, as well as of other things not commanded in ſcripture.

However the doctor proceeds thus: 'And I cannot ſee 'how it follows from this, that therefore faith is not a 'rational thing. For as to adult perſons, their being 'commanded to be baptized upon their believing does 'not in the leaſt prove that they did not embrace the 'chriſtian faith upon a rational conviction.' Had the churches of *England* and *Scotland* reſtrained baptiſm to *adult perſons* only, their miniſters would never have been thus preſſed by ſuch objections; nor could infidels ever have ſuggeſted, as this writer has done, that their members *did not embrace the chriſtian faith upon a rational conviction:* becauſe *their being commanded to be baptized upon their believing* neceſſarily implies *a rational conviction*; which the doctor is here compelled to own, that infants have not, when he adds. 'And as to infants, they have 'no faith at all; nor does their being baptized ſuppoſe 'they have any. All that it ſuppoſes, is not that they do 'themſelves believe, but that they are the children of 'believers; and are by that ſacred rite entered into the 'viſible ſociety of Chriſtians, ſolemnly dedicated to God, 'and commended to his grace and bleſſing by ſuch as do 'themſelves believe; and who ſolemnly undertake to ſee 'that they be carefully inſtructed in the principles of the 'chriſtian faith, when they come to years capable of it, 'and that they be trained up to a holy and a virtuous 'practice.'

But

But muſt we account infants members of Chriſt's viſible church, before they are believers? Of what uſe or credit can they, as ſuch, be to any church? And from what authority could the doctor imbibe theſe ſcriptureleſs notions, but from the kirk of *Scotland*, and the *Engliſh* directory? The kirk, in her form of baptiſm, ſays, 'Neither 'is it requiſite, that all thoſe that receive this ſacrament, 'have the uſe of underſtanding and faith;' and the directory ſays, that 'ſuch children by baptiſm are ſolemn-'ly received into the boſom of the viſible church; that 'they are Chriſtians, and federally holy before baptiſm, 'and therefore are they baptized.' See my remarks hereon, p. 33, 35. From theſe laſt words one would have imagined, that our *Engliſh* Preſbyterians believed, that infants have faith; tho' I find the doctor does not underſtand them ſo, and yet ſeems implicitly to receive what goes before. But is it at all becoming a Proteſtant, or in the leaſt worthy of a wiſe and learned miniſter, to reſt upon ſuch authorities as theſe? I am ſure the authority of our eſtabliſhed church is equally as good; and in her catechiſm baptiſm is ſaid to ſignify *an inward and ſpiritual grace in the perſon baptized*, together with *a death unto ſin, and a new birth unto righteouſneſs*, as the fruits of *repentance whereby they forſake ſin; and of faith, whereby they ſtedfaſtly believe the promiſes of God made to them in that ſacrament.* And her xxvii article ſays, 'Baptiſm is not 'only a ſign of profeſſion, ... but it is alſo a ſign of 'regeneration, or new birth, whereby, as by an inſtru-'ment, they that receive baptiſm rightly are grafted into 'the church: the promiſes of the forgiveneſs of ſin, 'and of our adoption to be the ſons of God by the Holy 'Ghoſt, are viſibly ſigned and ſealed: faith is confirmed, 'and grace increaſed by virtue of prayer unto God.' And therefore the queſtions are aſked, and the anſwers made in the infant's name. The prayers are put up for the infant in expreſs words, and the miniſter ſays, *that the child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Chriſt's church.*

Theſe things are abundantly more, than what the doctor ſays is all that the baptiſm of infants ſuppoſes; in which he widely differs from our eſtabliſhed church, whoſe ſentiments are ſo entirely contrary to his aſſertion, that ſhe ſuppoſes infants to be regenerated, that they have faith, and make profeſſion of it likewiſe; tho' indeed it is made after a very ſtrange manner, and without the leaſt evidence of faith.

faith. But if the ſcriptures had been ſtrictly attended to, and made by them the ſole rule and ground of proceeding, the kirk of *Scotland* would never have denied the one, nor our eſtabliſhed church have practiſed the other. But to return:

The doctor proceeds thus: 'So among the *Jews*, no 'adult perſon was allowed to be circumciſed, without 'profeſſing his belief and adherence to the law of *Moſes*; 'and his being circumciſed, was to be regarded as an open 'declaration of it. This was no proof at all, that he 'did not embrace that law upon a rational conviction, but 'rather ſuppoſed that he did ſo. But when he was him-'ſelf circumciſed and openly profeſſed that law, his 'children, if he had any, were to be circumciſed too;' [*by the expreſs appointment of God the doctor might have ſaid: and as no ſuch command can be produced for infant-baptiſm, his parallel is quite deſtroyed in the moſt eſſential part of it. And becauſe the command of God for the circumciſion of infants*] 'was not underſtood as a declaration that they 'alſo believed, of which they were not yet capable;' ſo no moral qualifications were required, nor is it any where ſaid, that they were dedicated to God by it; but, on the contrary, in the inſtitution of circumciſion, *Gen.* xvii. 11. it is only declared to be for a perpetual, or *everlaſting token of the covenant then made betwixt God and Abraham*, to be fulfilled in the family of *Iſaac* then unborn. And when God commanded them by *Moſes*, *Exodus* xiii. 2. 11—16. to *dedicate* or *ſanctify all their firſt-born unto him*, as a conſtant *token* and memorial of their deliverance from the laſt plague, for their ſakes, inflicted upon the *Egyptians*; it was neither to be done by circumciſion, nor at the time when the child was circumciſed, but at the end of the time appointed for the mother's purification; which was thirty three days after for a male, and eighty days after the birth of a female. See *Levit.* xii. And in conformity to thoſe laws, with reſpect to our bleſſed Saviour and his Virgin Mother, we read *Luke* ii. 21—24. *And when eight days were accompliſhed for the circumciſing of the child, his name was called* Jeſus..... *And when the days of her purification according to the law of* Moſes, *were accompliſhed, they brought him to* Jeruſalem, *to preſent him to the Lord, (as it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth the womb ſhall be called holy to the Lord) and to offer a ſacrifice*, &c. 'But [*here is not one ſyllable of the doctor's notion*] 'that they were dedicated to God' [*by circumciſion, tho' to be ſure they were looked upon*] 'as the children of

'his profeſſed people, and to be trained as they grew up, 'in the belief and acknowledgment of the living and 'true God, and the practice of his law. The doctor proceeds:

'And SUPPOSING it was the will of God,' [*this need not have been* SUPPOSED, *nor ought it to be admitted without the like command in ſcripture*] 'that in like manner in 'the chriſtian church not only adult perſons, who themſelves believed, but the children of ſuch ſhould be baptized; all that could be juſtly concluded from it would 'be, not that the chriſtian faith is not a reaſonable thing, 'but that the God of truth and purity well knew the doctrines of Chriſtianity to be highly important, and agreeable to truth and reaſon; and therefore would have 'children betimes inſtructed in thoſe doctrines; and that 'he knew the duties there preſcribed to be of great conſequence to our happineſs, and therefore would have 'children early trained up to the knowledge and practice 'of thoſe duties. And this' [*is done among the Baptiſts, who never pretend to bring their infants to baptiſm, becauſe they have no command from God to do ſo. And yet their children are under full as high, and as ſtrong an obligation to regard ſuch inſtructions without what the doctor ſays*] 'does not hinder, but rather obliges the perſon, who was 'thus early baptized, to conſider thoſe ſacred truths when 'he grows up; and then he is not to believe them becauſe he was taught them in his childhood, but becauſe 'he himſelf conſiders the evidence brought for them, 'and finds it reaſonable and convincing; and in like 'manner, it does not hinder him from examining into 'the nature and importance of the duties required of 'him, but rather obliges him to do ſo, that he may perform thoſe duties from a full conviction of their reaſonableneſs and excellency.' This we think the beſt qualification, and the fitteſt time, for their being baptized; not only as they are thereby more worthy ſubjects of it, but alſo as more glory muſt redound to God and Chriſt, and much more ſatisfaction, comfort, and joy, to their own ſouls, in the anſwer of a good conſcience: and to the church of Chriſt alſo, in not departing from the divine rule, than can poſſibly ariſe from the contrary practice of our Pædobaptiſt brethren in ſprinkling their infants. And in this view, the doctor might very conſiſtently have proceeded thus. 'To his queſtion therefore, Can a man be 'baptized into a rational religion? I anſwer yes. A man that 'is convinced of the truth of ſuch a religion, and believes it upon

' upon good evidence, may be reasonably baptized into it;
' *i.e.* he may solemnly, by that outward sacred rite, profess
' his belief of that religion, and oblige himself to the
' duties it prescribes; which is the design of baptism with
' regard to the adult. And' [*the doctor can never prove from scripture, that it was designed for any others, notwithstanding he says*] ' with regard to infants, it may be
' very reasonable for a man that himself believes it upon
' rational grounds, to baptize his child, *i. e.* solemnly
' by that sacred rite to devote his child to God,' [*when God commands it indeed, but not before, and yet nevertheless it is his duty to teach*] ' and to bring him, as far as in
' him lies, under engagements to embrace and practise
' that excellent religion, as soon as he is capable of doing
' so; at the same time solemnly obliging himself' [*or to think himself already obliged*] ' to take care that the child
' be betimes seasoned with the knowledge of sacred impor-
' tant truth, and formed to the practice of piety and vir-
' tue. And there is nothing improper, in supposing that
' it is the will and appointment of God, that children
' should betimes be brought under such engagements, when
' he knows them to be in themselves fit and reasonable,
' and of such a nature, that it will be their duty and their
' great advantage, when they come to years of discretion,
' personally to approve and to fulfil them. If this be lay-
' ing prejudices and prepossessions in their way, it is pre-
' possessing them in favour of truth and virtue: and it is
' every way agreeable to the divine wisdom and goodness,
' to lay them under such a prepossession, and what the au-
' thor of our beings has a right to do. And therefore his
' doing that, can never be justly brought as an objection
' against the reasonableness of a revelation.' And for the doing of all this, there is not the least occasion to sprinkle them, and falsly term it baptism; by which multitudes are kept from a rational obedience to that sacred institution of Christ Jesus.

I have here transcribed all the answer, which doctor *Leland* hath any where given to this Infidel's objection against the christian religion, from the practice of infant-baptism, in favour of which he is so far from alledging one single text of scripture, that, on the contrary, he himself seems to found it wholly upon mere human suppositions: which therefore, in the judgment of the church of *England*, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought necessary or requisite

to ſalvation. And how the practice thereof can be juſtified, or defended by thoſe, who heartily and ſincerely believe the vi article of our eſtabliſhed church, is not very eaſy to diſcern; for her vi article ſays expreſsly, that 'Holy ſcripture containeth all things neceſſary to ſalva-'tion: ſo that whatſoever is not read therein, nor may be 'proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that 'it ſhould be believed as an article of the faith, or be 'thought requiſite or neceſſary to ſalvation, *&c.*'

This truly proteſtant article is what one of her miniſters publicly declared to be *the glory of the church of England*, and then he heartily wiſhed, *that no other article had ever been made.* And I as heartily wiſh, that our eſtabliſhed church, and the kirk of *Scotland* alſo, were thus reformed, and conſtituted upon this foundation only; for then the Baptiſt churches would have no occaſion to diſpute with, or ſeparate from, them. But we might then hold the unity of the ſpirit, in the bond of peace together. And, as Dr. *Leland* expreſſes himſelf, [6] 'When 'once people are made ſenſible of the tendency of ſuch a 'ſcheme, it is to be hoped, that it will in a great mea-'ſure prove an antidote to the poiſon of [*infidelity*] and 'that piety and good ſenſe is not ſo far loſt in the world, 'that men will lightly ſuffer themſelves to be bantered 'out of their religion and reaſon too. Such attempts, 'one would be apt to think, ſhould, with perſons that 'will allow themſelves time for reflection, turn to the 'advantage of Chriſtianity.' [6]

SECT. VII.

Remarks on Mr. Benſon's *Dialogue, intitled, The Reaſonableneſs of the Chriſtian Religion.*

I RESERVED Mr. *Benſon*'s anſwer to this infidel's objection, concerning infant-baptiſm, to be laſt conſidered, becauſe it is ſo very full, that he hath almoſt prevented my making any remarks upon it; and his frank, open conceſſions have given me a ſuitable opportunity freely to expoſtulate with him, and his brethren, upon their unſcriptural practice of infant-ſprinkling; which for a long

[6] Firſt Letter, p. 6.

long time has furniſhed Papiſts with a conſiderable advantage in their diſputes with Proteſtants, and has now given Infidels an occaſion to ridicule our holy religion. To which Mr. *Benſon* replies, p. 95, 96.

'The objection was founded on a miſtaken notion of 'baptiſm; and therefore had no force in it. Your au- 'thor, *Pyrrho*, knows very well that ſome Chriſtians 'deny infant-baptiſm; and he had much better have done 'ſo, than have given up his underſtanding, and rational 'Chriſtianity, all at once.'

The objection of this unbeliever againſt infant-baptiſm is plainly founded on that notion of it, which is contained in the forms and catechiſm of the church of *England*; and this Mr. *Benſon* is pleaſed to call *a miſtaken notion of baptiſm.* He might have ſaid with equal truth, that infant-baptiſm in general, as well as the practice of it in our eſtabliſhed church, is *founded on a miſtaken notion.* For how can it be otherwiſe, if it has no foundation in the word of God, as he manifeſtly allows, when he ſays; this author had *much better have denied* and given it up, *than have given up his underſtanding and rational Chriſtianity?* For if he did not acknowledge this, but was really perſuaded, that there is ſcripture authority for it, he would not have adviſed his author to give it up, but only to correct his *miſtaken notions* about it. And if this be the caſe, if there is no ſcripture for it, if the conſequence of admitting infant-baptiſm be to any man the occaſion of *giving up his underſtanding and rational Chriſtianity*, as Mr. *Benſon*'s words ſeem plainly to imply; why does he not openly renounce the practice, and no longer countenance it in his people, and build them up in any miſtaken notion of baptiſm?

After this he proceeds to give us ſome hints, and ſome account of the various pretences, opinions, cuſtoms, and forms made uſe of by Preſbyterians, Independents, and others, as well as our eſtabliſhed church, as follows: 'But 'others, who are for infant-baptiſm, do not ſuppoſe any 'faith to be required in a child: tho' they would require it 'in a Jew, Heathen or Mahometan, upon their coming 'over to Chriſtianity in riper years. The ſame ceremony 'may anſwer different ends upon different ſubjects, or in 'the caſe of different perſons. Thoſe in general, whom '*John* baptized, confeſſed their ſins, and were baptized, 'as penitents, for the remiſſion of ſins. And yet our 'Saviour, who had no ſin to confeſs, nor any need for

'repentance,

repentance, was baptized by *John*; I suppose, to initiate him into his office, as the great Messiah. The circumcision of *Abraham* was to him, who was a believer, the seal of the righteousness of that faith, which he had before he was circumcised. But could not be the seal of faith unto infants at eight days old, to whom it was nevertheless commanded to be administred, merely as the initiating ceremony. Many Christians argue in like manner, about christian baptism, and suppose that it may signify some things, when applied to the adult, different from what it can signify, when applied to infants. To the last they look upon it as a mere initiating ceremony, by which a christian parent, or sponsor, ingages in a solemn manner to train up that child in what he apprehends to be a rational religion. By that external rite such a child is entered into the school of Christ, to be trained up in his religion; that he may learn the nature and evidence of it, as his understanding opens, and be taught to live in all that purity which the outward washing with water denotes, and which Christianity requires. There are some, who represent baptism as absolutely necessary to salvation; who speak of persons as actually saved, upon the strength of the mere ceremony; who make children commence believers upon the imputed faith of their bondsmen, or sureties; and make the sponsor say, *I believe*, and *it is my desire to be baptized*; when he hath no design to be baptized himself, but hath actually been baptized many years before; who pretend to baptize not with water only, but also with the *Holy Ghost*; or to connect with baptism the conferring of grace, or of the *Holy Spirit*; as was actually done, after baptism, by the *Apostles*; but which no other persons since have had the power of doing.

In all this, only these twelve words, *I suppose, to initiate him into his office, as the great Messiah*, can with certainty be taken as Mr. *Benson*'s own judgment and persuasion: and therefore, whether he has here given us his own notion of infant-baptism, I know not; but this is manifest, he does not mention any one notion of it as agreeable to scripture, nor pretend to bring any proof for that practice from thence. He is so far from attempting this, that he freely condemns most, if not all the notions, which some churches have had concerning baptism, together with their forms of administration, as unscriptural, in the

the following words, 'But as to those who hold such 'opinions, and make use of such forms' [*namely the opinions and forms abovementioned*] 'let them answer for them. 'Such things do not appear to me to be according to the 'pleasure and ordinance of God himself in this point. 'All I can do is, out of a sincere concern for Christi-'anity itself, most humbly to breathe out my wishes and 'ardent prayers, that such stumbling-blocks may be taken 'out of the way; and that all parties of Christians 'would endeavour to cut off occasion from those who are 'perpetually seeking occasion to blaspheme that holy 'name, by the which we are called!' [*in the number of which occasions he allows, that infant-baptism is one, and therefore he adds*] 'However, the New Testament itself is 'a stranger to any such sentiments, or practices; and 'therefore Christianity is not, in the least, affected by this 'objection.'

I freely subscribe to what Mr. *Benson* here says, when he pronounces those notions and forms, made use of in infant-baptism, no part of *Christianity*; or that *objections* against it, founded on that practice, are what real *Christianity is not in the least affected by*: because *the New Testament itself is a stranger to any such sentiments or practices.* But I must likewise observe that these questions were properly asked, and the responses rightly made in the primitive times, when none were admitted to baptism, but those only, who had been first instructed in the knowledge of Christianity, and made a personal profession *of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God.* *Heb.* vi. 1, 2. And I cannot but add, that some churches still retaining these ancient forms is a plain confession, that they have changed the proper subject, and is also a standing proof of the antiquity of adult-baptism. And this appears very clearly from the liturgy in the apostolical constitutions, the most ancient now in being; and which, according to Mr. *Whiston*, [7] contains the true original baptismal creed, from whence that, which is commonly stiled the apostles creed, is only an abridgment. The office of baptism in them begins thus:

'Book VII. Sect. LXIII. Now after what manner 'those ought to live that are initiated into Christ, and 'what thanksgivings they ought to send up to God, thro' 'Christ, has been said in the foregoing directions: But 'it

[7] *Essay on the Constitutions*, p. 215.

' it is reaſonable not to leave even thoſe who are not yet
' initiated without aſſiſtance.

' XXXIX. He therefore who is to be catechized in the
' word of piety, let him be inſtructed before his bap-
' tiſm in the knowledge of the unbegotten God, in the
' underſtanding of his only begotten Son, in the aſſured
' acknowledgment of the Holy Ghoſt: let him learn
' the order of the ſeveral parts of the creation, the ſeries
' of providence, the different diſpenſations of the laws:
' let him be inſtructed why the world was made, and
' why man was appointed to be a citizen therein; let
' him alſo know his own nature, of what ſort it is; let
' him be taught how God puniſhed the wicked with wa-
' ter, and did glorify the ſaints in every generation, I
' mean *Seth*, and *Enoch*, and *Noah*, and *Abraham*, and
' his poſterity, and *Melchiſedeck*, and *Job*, and *Moſes*,
' and *Joſhua*, and *Caleb*, and *Phineas* the Prieſt, and
' thoſe that were holy in every generation; and how
' God ſtill took care of, and did not reject mankind, but
' called them from their error and vanity, to the ac-
' knowledgment of the truth at various ſeaſons, reduc-
' ing them from bondage and impiety unto liberty and
' piety, from injuſtice to righteouſneſs, from death eter-
' nal to everlaſting life. Let him that offers himſelf to
' baptiſm, learn theſe and the like things in his catechiz-
' ing; and let him who lays his hands upon him adore
' God, the Lord of the whole world, and thank him for
' his creation, for his ſending Chriſt, his only begotten
' Son, that he might ſave men, by blotting out his tranſ-
' greſſions; that he might remit ungodlineſs, and ſins,
' and might *purify him from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*,
' and ſanctify man according to the good pleaſure of his
' kindneſs, that he might inſpire him with the knowledge
' of his will, and enlighten the eyes of his heart to conſi-
' der of his wonderful works, and make known to him
' the judgments of righteouſneſs; that ſo he might hate
' every way of iniquity, and walk in the way of truth;
' that he might be thought worthy of the laver of rege-
' neration, to the adoption of ſons, which is in Chriſt,
' that *being planted together in the likeneſs of the death of*
' *Chriſt*, in hopes of a glorious communication, he may
' be mortified to ſin, and may live to God, as to his
' mind, and word, and deed, and may be numbered toge-
' ther in the book of the living: and after this thankſgiv-

' ing

' ing, let him inſtruct him in the doctrines concerning ' our Lord's incarnation, and in thoſe concerning his ' paſſion, and reſurrection from the dead, and aſſump- ' tion.

' XL. And when it remains that the catechumen is to ' be baptized, let him learn what concerns the renuncia- ' tion of the devil, and the joining himſelf with Chriſt: ' for it is fit that he ſhould firſt abſtain from things con- ' trary, and then be admitted to the myſteries; he muſt ' before hand purify his heart from all wickedneſs of diſ- ' poſition, from all ſpot and wrinkle, and then partake ' of the holy things: for as the ſkilfulleſt huſbandman ' does firſt purge his ground of the thorns which are ' grown up therein, and does then ſow his wheat, ſo ' ought you alſo to take away all impiety from them, and ' then to ſow the ſeeds of piety in them, and vouchſafe ' them baptiſm. For even our Lord did in this manner ' exhort us ſaying, firſt *make diſciples of all nations*, and ' then he adds this, and *baptize them into the name of the* ' *Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.* Let ' therefore the candidate for baptiſm declare thus in his ' renunciation:

' XLI. I renounce *Satan*, and his works, and his pomps, ' and his worſhips, and his angels, and his inventions, ' and all things that are under him. And after his re- ' nunciation, let him in his aſſociation ſay, And I aſſociate ' myſelf to Chriſt, and believe, and am baptized into ' one unbegotten being, the only true God, Almighty, ' the Father of Chriſt, the creator and maker of all ' things, from whom are all things; and into the Lord ' Jeſus Chriſt, his only begotten Son, the firſt-born of the ' whole creation, who before the ages was begotten by the ' good pleaſure of the father; by whom all things were ' made, both thoſe in heaven, and thoſe on earth, viſible ' and inviſible, who in the laſt days deſcended from ' heaven, and took fleſh, and was born of the holy Virgin ' Mary, and did converſe holily, according to the laws of ' his God and father, and was crucified under *Pontius Pi-* ' *late*, and died for us, and roſe again from the dead after ' his paſſion the third day, and aſcended into the heavens, ' and ſitteth at the right hand of the father, and again is ' to come at the end of the world with glory, to judge ' the quick and the dead, of whoſe kingdom there ſhall ' be no end. And I am baptized into the Holy Ghoſt,

'that is the comforter, who wrought in all the ſaints from 'the beginning of the world, but was afterwards ſent to 'the apoſtles by the father, according to the promiſe of 'our Saviour and Lord, Jeſus Chriſt; and after the 'apoſtles, to all thoſe that believe in the holy catholic 'church. Into the reſurrection of the fleſh, and into 'the remiſſion of ſins, and into the kingdom of heaven, 'and into the life of the world to come.'

Theſe rules juſtly deſerve the moſt ſerious regard of every Chriſtian. And, notwithſtanding what Mr. *Benſon* ſays, it is my humble opinion, that the ſureſt way to remove theſe ſtumbling blocks is not to lay aſide the ancient forms, but to reſtore primitive baptiſm, both as to the mode and ſubject. However, if the Baptiſt churches, or as Mr. *Benſon* here expreſſes it, if pure and primitive *Chriſtianity is not in the leaſt affected by this objection*; yet I am ſure Mr. *Benſon* himſelf, with all his Pædobaptiſt brethren, even every denomination of Chriſtians, except thoſe who utterly diſown and renounce infant-baptiſm, muſt be ſo greatly *affected by it*, that they can never defend pure and primitive Chriſtianity, I don't ſay with *the leaſt*, but with that conſiſtency, which it is neceſſary, and moſt to be wiſhed, that they could. And is it not greatly to be lamented, that ſuch excellent abilities, and ſuch diſtinguiſhing endowments, as many of them poſſeſs, ſhould be rendered ineffectual for the conviction and converſion of Papiſts and Infidels, by their practice of that unſcriptural ceremony in any form whatſoever? For Mr. *Benſon* affirms, [1] 'That, before men are capable of 'underſtanding, no faith can be required of them; any 'more than reaſon or virtue can be expected of infants, 'before they become moral agents.' And of infants the *Oxford* Reply ſays; [2] 'They have no reaſon, nor are they 'therefore capable of religion.' And we are aſſured by a much higher authority, that, *without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe* God. Heb. xi. 6. But if inſtead of renouncing and giving up ſuch things, miniſters will on the contrary practiſe, as a ſolemn act of religion, [3] What is no where *expreſsly revealed in the New Teſtament*, [4] What *the New Teſtament itſelf is a ſtranger to*, [5] about which *the chriſtian*

[1] Page 108. [2] Page 7. [3] *Cambridge Letter*, p. 5. [4] Mr. *Benſon*'s Dialogue, p. 95. [5] Mr. *Male*'s Grounds, p. 56.

chriſtian religion, or the rational believers of it, have nothing *further to do with . . . . . than to diſown and diſavow them*, becauſe, [4] *from any thing* they *could have met with there*, they *could never have thought of it.* [5] If they believe in the perpetuity of baptiſm; that it was *inſtituted as a means and aſſiſtance to preſerve men ſtedfaſt in the practice of thoſe moral duties, which are of eternal and unchangeable obligation*; and that it was *deſigned* for the *ſolemn admiſſion* of *every member into the* chriſtian church, and thereby *intitling him to all the privileges of being within the pale*; ſuch *a plain ſignificant rite, ſo free from all appearance of ſuperſtition and vanity, and ſo wiſely fitted to the end for which it was deſigned, that no man can juſtly, or with any reaſon, object againſt it*; [6] and yet neither be baptized themſelves, nor encourage and ſtir up the people, who are under their care to regard Chriſt's authority in this point; if on the contrary, they continue to adminiſter infant-baptiſm, or ſome other thing inſtead of it, to infants, and build their people up in the belief and practice of what themſelves do not believe [6] *to be according to the pleaſure and ordinance of God himſelf in that point*; if they [7] *moſt humbly breathe out their wiſhes and ardent prayers, that ſuch ſtumbling blocks may be taken out of the way*; and yet make no ſtand againſt them, nor exert one effort for removing them, what can we think? May we not juſtly aſk them, how far ſuch a conduct is conſiſtent with ſincerity, and with that regard to Chriſt's laws and authority, which as miniſters of the goſpel, they are bound, in duty and in conſcience, uniformly to ſhew forth in the whole of their converſation and miniſtry; whether under theſe convictions they can anſwer ſuch neglects at the awful bar of God in the great day of account; and whether Mr. *Benſon*, with all his Pædobaptiſt brethren, ought not calmly and ſeriouſly to conſider theſe things for their own and their peoples ſakes; many of whom perhaps have been miſled and hindered from obeying and glorifying Chriſt in this particular, as they might, and would otherwiſe have done? For as Mr. *Benſon* expreſſes himſelf, [8] 'What intereſt is it of mine, that [*my friend*] *Pyrrho* 'ſhould think and act right, but only that he is my 'friend, and that I ſincerely wiſh well to him and to

[4] Dr. *Doddridge*'s Third Letter, p. 57. [5] Mr. *Benſon*'s Dialogue, p. 25, 26. [6] Mr. *Mole*'s Grounds, p. 57. [7] Mr. *Benſon*'s Dialogue, p. 95. [8] Ibid p. 63.

'all mankind; and ſhould rejoice to ſee all attend to evi-
'dence, honeſtly acknowledge it, when they are con-
'vinced; and, in all reſpects, take the right method in
'thinking and acting.'

But if after all, they will ſtill neglect this important point of Chriſtianity, what will Papiſts and Infidels think, nay, what will they not ſay of them and their religion? What greater advantage can they have, or deſire to have againſt Chriſtians and Proteſtants, than their allowing a practice, which they confeſs is unſcriptural? For as it i owned to be no part of the chriſtian religion, thoſe enemies of truth can eaſily diſcern their advantage, and know very well how to make a proper uſe of it. For which reaſon, I ſhall not be ſurprized to ſee them baffled both by Papiſts and Infidels, till they are thereby forced upon a reformation, which I ſhould greatly rejoice to ſee.

But ſurely thoſe churches, which have carried the reformation ſo far, as not to give the leaſt handle to either, by an open neglect, or by making any unwarrantable alterations in Chriſt's moſt ſolemn inſtitutions, ought as carefully to avoid giving the moſt diſtant occaſion for ſaying, That tho' we are baptized ourſelves, yet we countenance other Chriſtians in an open neglect of Chriſt's ordinance, by communicating with them at the Lord's Table; notwithſtanding we know, and believe in our own conſciences, they never were baptized according to Chriſt's appointment. For this, perhaps, will be ſaid to look too much like renouncing our own baptiſm, and may by Infidels be thought no leſs than a tacit acknowledgment, that tho' we own Chriſt for the legiſlator of his church, yet there is not ſo much regard due to his laws and inſtitutions, as Chriſtians ſometimes pretend. And ſince we live in an age of moſt free inquiry, it will highly become all Chriſtians to follow this advice of *Minucius Felix*; 'Let us make a good uſe of the bleſſing of divine truth, 'let us govern our knowledge with diſcretion, let ſuper-'ſtition and impiety be no more, and let true religion 'triumph in their ſtead.' Which God grant may be the happy iſſue of theſe debates!

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CONCLUSION.

I HAVE now gone through all, that I at firſt intended, in making remarks upon the ſeveral anſwers to this infidel writer, which have been publiſhed by our Pædobaptiſt brethren; and think it not improper to inform my readers, that the reaſon, why I have not here ſhewn from ſcripture, what is the true way of adminiſtering the ordinance of baptiſm, and who are the proper ſubjects, for whom only it was deſigned, is firſt, becauſe the ſeveral authors of thoſe anſwers have therein plainly and openly given up infant-baptiſm, as an unſcriptural thing, and as ſuch, no part of the chriſtian religion: ſo that it was quite unneceſſary for me to attempt thoſe proofs in making remarks upon their writings. Secondly, becauſe I have already publiſhed a treatiſe upon the ſubject, wherein the ſcriptures, relating to that ordinance, are particularly conſidered; to which I have ſometimes referred, and for the fuller ſatisfaction of all my readers, do here recommend to them, a ſerious peruſal of that tract, intitled, A ſupplement to the ſermons preached againſt popery at *Salters-Hall:* where they will find, that the commiſſion, our Lord gave his diſciples to baptize all nations, relates only to believers; which is confirmed from the general and particular inſtances recorded in ſcripture of perſons baptized. I have there likewiſe given the reaſons, why it extends to every believer, together with the great benefit it is of to all ſuch, as come to it in the anſwer of a good conſcience. The manner alſo how it was and ought to be adminiſtered, is ſhewn from the hiſtory of the evangeliſts, the acts of the apoſtles, and the alluſions to Chriſt's death, burial and reſurrection in their epiſtles. And I have therein anſwered the various arguments of our brethren for infant baptiſm, and the objections made againſt our practice of immerſion. I have ſet forth ſomething of the evil which attends altering the divine inſtitution, and ſhewn that Proteſtants have no more power to do ſo, nor can it be more lawful for them, than it is for Papiſts. I have ſupported the whole from antiquity, and many paſſages taken from the writings of our Pædobaptiſt brethren; and at laſt ſhewn ſomething of the moral obligation, which every believer in Chriſt is under, of ſubmitting

ting to his inſtitution; with the uſe which baptiſm and the Lord's-Supper are of to promote true piety and ſtrict virtue, as well as to ſecure us from ſuperſtition and infidelity. All which, if duly conſidered, with the appendix to the laſt editions in anſwer to Mr. *Emlyn*'s previous queſtion, and what I have here ſaid, will, I hope, be ſufficient to convince our Pædobaptiſt brethren, how neceſſary a reformation is; and ſo induce them to lay aſide infant-ſprinkling, that unſcripturral practice, which, by their own confeſſion, is no part of the chriſtian religion. That thereby they may no longer expoſe Chriſtianity to the ridicule of Infidels, but may prevent ſuch objections againſt it for the time to come.

And as the worthy and learned members of our two Univerſities, together with ſome eminent miniſters of our diſſenting brethren, out of their ſincere love and pious regard to Chriſtianity, have given up this traditionary practice, in their ſeveral defences of our holy religion againſt the growing and daring infidelity of the age; I hope there are no Proteſtants ſo bigotted to popiſh corruptions, or mere human ceremonies, as to ſhew themſelves the great enemies of divine revelation, by pretending to vindicate a practice from thence, which is ſo manifeſtly injurious to Chriſtianity, as it gives ſuch countenance to the ſcoffs and deriſion of deiſts; and is ſo great an encouragement to their infidelity. But,

Finally, conſidering that theſe Remarks may poſſibly fall into the hands of ſome readers, who have never ſeen my ſupplement, I will therefore, for the ſake of ſuch, briefly add ſomething for their ſatisfaction.

And *I think* all that is neceſſary for *a ſufficient*, *if not* the compleat illuſtration of this ſubject, *may be reduced* to one or other of theſe three heads of inquiry.

What it is to be *baptized into Chriſt*.

Who, according to the plain ſenſe of the inſtitution itſelf, the general doctrine of the New Teſtament, and the general practice of the apoſtles, are the proper ſubjects of baptiſm. And,

Whether it was intended as a temporary inſtitution, and to be confined to proſelytes only, or is of univerſal and perpetual obligation.

As there is a great compaſs and variety of argument included under each of theſe heads, I muſt content myſelf with giving ſhort ſketches, without inſiſting on every particular; but hope however, tho' in an abſtract, to

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give obvious and convincing reaſons on the ſide of what I apprehend to be the truth, and a clear confutation of all oppoſite pretences.

In the firſt place, what are we to underſtand by the ſcripture expreſſion, of *being baptized into Chriſt*? The general ſenſe is moſt evidently this, that we are baptized into the ſolemn profeſſion and acknowledgment of his religion, which he was commiſſioned by God to reveal and publiſh, and enabled to confirm and eſtabliſh by many unqueſtionable, great, and beneficent miracles: juſt as the Jews being baptized into *Moſes* implied in it, in the ſentiment of St. *Paul*, who made uſe of that phraſe, their owning him as their leader, and his inſtitution to be divine. Thus far the matter ſeems to be perfectly unperplexed and free from difficulty.

"And the manner in which this action of *being baptized into Chriſt*, is to be performed, is alſo as clear and certain; becauſe from the nature of the inſtitution, there cannot be two different modes of adminiſtering one and the ſame divine ordinance. For the very nature of baptiſm ſo neceſſarily implies dipping, that where aſperſion, or perfuſion only are made uſe of, there cannot, in propriety of ſpeech, be any baptiſm at all, becauſe baptiſm, and dipping, are the ſame thing. And the ſeveral alluſions made to it in ſcripture, as of a *death*, *burial*, and *reſurrection*, are a ſufficient proof of this; where Chriſtians are ſaid to *be baptized into Chriſt's death*, with a manifeſt reference to his being buried and riſing again from the grave, and in this ſenſe St. *Paul* clearly, and ſtrongly expreſſes himſelf, over and over again, *Rom.* vi. where it is ſaid, *We are buried with him by baptiſm into death: that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the glory of the father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life.* And following the metaphor ſtill further he adds; *for if we have been planted together in the likeneſs of his death: we ſhall be alſo in the likeneſs of his reſurrection.* And again, *Coloſſ.* ii. 12. *buried with Chriſt in baptiſm, wherein alſo you are riſen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who raiſed him from the dead.*

The hiſtorical accounts alſo, which we have in ſcripture of perſons baptized, neceſſarily oblige us to confine our idea of that ſolemn inſtitution to immerſion or dipping only. I ſhall here only mention two inſtances. The firſt is that of our Saviour himſelf, whoſe command and example ſhould be the ſole rule of every believer's conduct; and

and, with reſpect to him, St. *Mark* informs us, ch. i. 9, 10, 11. *And it came to paſs in thoſe days, that Jeſus came from* Nazareth *of* Galilee, *and was baptized of* John *in* Jordan. (or as it might have been truly and better rendered, dipped of *John* into *Jordan*) *And ſtraightway coming up out of the water, he ſaw the heavens opened, and the ſpirit like a dove deſcending upon him. And there came a voice from heaven,* ſaying, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed.* The other is in the book of the *Acts*, after our Lord's aſcenſion, and ſending down the Holy Ghoſt upon the apoſtles, which was promiſed to lead them into all truth, *John* xvi. 13. and by which they were *dued with power from on high*, to confirm their doctrine. And under the influence of this, *Philip* was directed to attend the chariot of the eunuch, and preach the goſpel to him; the iſſue of which is thus related by St. *Luke*. *And as they went on* their *way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch ſaid, ſee,* here is *water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And* Philip *ſaid, if thou believeſt with all thine heart, thou mayeſt. And he anſwered and ſaid, I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to ſtand ſtill: and they went down both into the water, both* Philip *and the Eunuch; and he baptized* [*or dipped*] *him. And when they were come up out of the water, the ſpirit of the Lord caught away* Philip, *that the Eunuch ſaw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.* Acts viii. 36—39." This is ſufficient, as a general detail of the argument under the firſt head of inquiry. I now proceed to the ſecond, which is this:

Who are the proper ſubjects of baptiſm, and that they are only the adult, upon their making a free and voluntary profeſſion of their faith in Chriſt, and repentance towards God, is, I think, abundantly confirmed by the whole ſtrain and current of the New Teſtament. *Of this Gal.* iii. 27. *in particular* appears to me to afford a manifeſt and ſtrong demonſtration, in which is directly aſſerted, that *as many*, that is, all without exception; for St. *Paul* himſelf does not exclude one ſingle caſe, and therefore Chriſtians ought not; however neceſſary it may be to the ſupport of a favourite ſcheme, to which they are moſt zealouſly and fondly devoted; in this text, I ſay, it is directly aſſerted, that all without exception, who *are baptized into Chriſt, do put on Chriſt*. The phraſe plainly denotes a voluntary act of their own, an act of piety in the ſubjects of baptiſm, and not a forced ty, not a mere external

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and mechanical operation; and conſequently, infants are plainly declared, by this paſſage, to be incapable of baptiſm, if we proceed rightly, according to the chriſtian rule, becauſe they are incapable of reaſon, and faith, and free determination. And this interpretation the ſame apoſtle has confirmed beyond all contradiction in another place, where he oppoſes *putting on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt to making proviſion for the fleſh*, repreſenting both as actions equally voluntary, and that relate to a moral character. As *to put on the new man* is explained by *being renewed in the ſpirit of our mind*; ſo *to put on Chriſt* is to take upon us the chriſtian character, and to bind ourſelves, in a ſolemn engagement, to imitate the temper and life of Chriſt; as all did, if we may give credit to St. *Paul*, who were baptized in the firſt age of Chriſtianity, but infants cannot poſſibly do; and therefore the baptizing ſuch can be regarded in no other light than that of an innovation, abſolutely unknown in the apoſtolical times. And indeed, if we examine the commiſſion itſelf, which our Lord gave the apoſtles to baptize, this error of modern Chriſtianity will appear in as full and diſtinct a view. The commiſſion runs thus, *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*; where it is obvious to obſerve, Firſt, that the ſtated order is to teach, and then to baptize. And, Secondly, that there is no more reaſon to affirm that all, who were taught, were obliged to be baptized, than that all, who were baptized, were to be previouſly taught. The text is equally explicit in both caſes, and the ſubjects of both are of exactly the ſame extent, *all nations*. But I muſt only ſuggeſt hints; and therefore proceed to mention ſome other texts, which undeniably prove, that the practice of the apoſtles was ſtrictly conformable to the rule eſtabliſhed by their great Lord and maſter.

Thus, when by St. *Peter's* firſt ſermon the people, who heard him, were convinced of the ſin and infinite danger of their unbelief and ſtubborn contempt of the goſpel, and ſaid to him and to the reſt of the apoſtles, *Men and brethren, what ſhall we do?* His anſwer was, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins*. And it is afterwards added, *then they that gladly received his word, were baptized*. In like manner, when the Eunuch, upon a firm perſuaſion of the truth of Chriſtianity, deſired to be admitted to baptiſm,

Philip laid before him the neceſſary and unalterable condition of his receiving that privilege, in theſe words, *If thou believeſt with all thine heart, thou mayeſt.* And ſo ſuppoſe, that there are two ſorts of qualifications for one and the ſame ordinance, when no diſtinction at all is once intimated in any ſingle paſſage of the New Teſtament; nay, to imagine that the qualifications are equally valid, which are as different from each other, as faith, and no faith; or, which amounts to the ſame, as knowledge and ignorance, a voluntary profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and the being capable of no religion at all; this is not only framing an arbitrary ſcheme, but, in my opinion, an abſolutely incoherent and incredible ſcheme. The nature and ends of baptiſm as adminiſtered to believers, and the nature and ends of it, if it be adminiſtered to ſuch as cannot believe, muſt certainly be as different, as thoſe of any two different ordinances, that we can poſſibly conceive of. But the nature and uſes of chriſtian baptiſm are always deſcribed in one uniform ſtrain, ſuited to the caſe of adult believers only, and impoſſible, by any force or ſtretch of invention, to be adapted to the ſtate of infants. Upon the whole then, as it is generally acknowledged, that there is no expreſs command for baptizing infants, nor a ſingle precedent to be found in favour of it, throughout the whole New Teſtament; ſo neither is there the leaſt, moſt obſcure, involved, and diſtant hint, that it had ever been practiſed, or was in itſelf allowable. The commiſſion, the examples, the deſcriptions and accounts relating to baptiſm, are confined to quite different ſubjects, and abſolutely diſcourage all ſuch pretenſions. Upon what foot then, it may be aſked, can a cuſtom, of which there are no traces in the religion of Chriſt, and which ſeems, indeed, to be quite alien from the genius and complexion of it, as a rational and moral inſtitution; upon what foot, I ſay, can this cuſtom be defended, by ſo many upright, and, in other reſpects, judicious Chriſtians, who profeſs to take the goſpel for the only rule of chriſtian order and worſhip?

I anſwer, that our brethren themſelves are not rightly and thoroughly agreed upon the fundamental principle, on which to raiſe and eſtabliſh their ſcheme. Some talk of the *Abrahamic* covenant, which they ſtile *the covenant of grace*, the ſame in ſubſtance with the diſpenſation of the goſpel; and that as infants were admitted to circumciſion, which they make the ſeal of this *Abrahamic* covenant

nant of grace, they must, by a parity of reason, have a right to baptism; since it cannot be conceived that their privileges are retrenched, but it may rather be expected, that they would be considerably enlarged under a religion, which is the completion of all others, and contains the fullest and brightest displays of the grace and tender mercies of God. The following remarks will, I apprehend, be abundantly sufficient to shew, that this is a foundation much too weak to uphold the superstructure that has been erected upon it, and a principle clogged with heavy and unsurmountable difficulties.

1. What they call the *Abrahamic* covenant does not appear to have any thing in it like *a covenant*. It was only *a promise*, by way of prediction, of blessings that would be derived to the faithful, from *Abraham*'s seed, in future, and far, far distant ages. It was not a stipulation of blessings, as this strange and perplexed notion of a covenant implies; it was not, I say, a stipulation of blessings, which *Abraham* himself would ever live to see or enjoy; but of a privilege, not designed to be communicated till the times of the *Messiah*. And tho' this is declared, by St. *Paul*, to be *a preaching the gospel to Abraham*, it is only in a more improper and figurative sense: just as many prophecies and promises of the Old Testament might be said to be *preaching the gospel*, long before that holy and most spiritual institution commenced, to the whole *Jewish* nation.

2. Circumcision is never stiled the seal of any covenant, but if it belonged to the covenant of grace, it was a seal not at all necessary with respect even to such, as are allowed to have been really interested in that covenant. For all females were utterly excluded from it, without any the least prejudice, I would hope, to their spiritual and eternal concerns. If infants therefore are excluded from baptism, they also may sustain no damage. So that the whole of this plea for infants is a heap of confusion and inconsistency; and all the warm and pathetic exclamations, that are so often mixed with it, are mere dismal sounds, that have no energy in them, can never convince the truly considerate and divested of all prejudice, nor answer any valuable purpose. Infants are as safe, their privileges as entire, and their state as good, upon this principle, without baptism, as with it; as that of one half of the *Jewish* nation was without circumcision. Why then should they be forced, without their consent, to undergo

what is called the ordinance of baptiſm, without any encouragement from, and againſt the plain rules and examples of, the New Teſtament? But,

3. What has been offered under the foregoing head affords, I think, a ſtrong probability that circumciſion had, and could have, no relation at all to the covenant of grace, but only to the peculiar immunities of the race and deſcendants of *Abraham*. For did the great God, whoſe tender mercies are over all his works, enter into a covenant relation with the males only? Or if an inſtituted ſeal of the covenant be ſuch an extraordinary privilege, as our brethren profeſs it to be, could not one have been inſtituted, that would have diſcovered univerſal and more impartial goodneſs; that might have been equally a ſeal to all that were included within the terms of the imagined covenant? But,

Finally, and to diſmiſs this topic, that circumciſion could not belong to the covenant of grace, or to the goſpel preached to *Abraham*, is manifeſt, even to a demonſtration, from what St. *Paul* has ſo ſtrenuouſly aſſerted, and copiouſly argued, in his epiſtle to the *Galatians*; where he refers it entirely to what, in the language of ſchool-divinity, is ſtiled the covenant of works, according to the ſtrict tenor of which, no man could reaſonably hope for ſalvation. *If*, ſays this great apoſtle, *ye be circumciſed, Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing. For I teſtify again to every man that is circumciſed, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.* (which law ran in this fearful, rigid ſtrain, *Curſed is every one, that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them*, Gal. iii. 10.) *Chriſt is become of no effect unto you, whoſoever of you are juſtified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.* Gal. v. 2, 3, 5. By theſe, it is likely, and other conſiderations of a like nature, ſeveral of our Pædobaptiſt brethren have been ſo ſtruck and convinced, that they have deſerted the old foundation, and built upon a new one; and that is, the cuſtom of baptizing proſelytes and their children, in uſe, as they ſay, before our Saviour's coming, amongſt the *Jews*, and which he intended his diſciples ſhould imitate. To which I ſhall only ſay, Firſt, that if this be a good argument for infant-baptiſm, it muſt hold equally ſtrong for baptizing none but proſelytes and their children. Secondly, that our Lord, by inſtituting baptiſm only for diſciples inſtructed and believing, has plainly diſcovered, that he intended different ſubjects of baptiſm from thoſe, which this argument

ment pretends the *Jews* admitted. And, Thirdly, that there is no ground in hiſtory for ſuppoſing, that the *Jews* had any ſuch eſtabliſhed cuſtom in the ancient times here ſuppoſed. The Old Teſtament is abſolutely ſilent about it; ſo is the Apocrypha, ſo is the New Teſtament, ſo are *Joſephus* and *Philo*, grave and credible hiſtorians, who profeſſedly treat of the antiquities and ceremonies of the *Jews*. *Joſephus*, in relating two caſes of proſelytiſm, mentions circumciſion only, and gives not the leaſt intimation about a baptiſm. The moſt early chriſtian writers appear to have had no knowledge of it. St. *Paul*, for a prelude to chriſtian baptiſm, fixes on the *Iſraelites* being *baptized* in the cloud, and in the ſea, inſtead of hinting at this *Jewiſh* baptiſm; which, if it was really the model of that appointed by Chriſt, he had the faireſt opportunity in the world of introducing ſome account of, and could ſcarce have failed to introduce. Upon what ground then, it may be aſked, have learned men advanced and propagated a notion, that ſeems ſo little credible? I anſwer, upon the bare authority of Talmudical books, not compoſed till about three hundred years after Chriſt, and ſtuffed with blaſphemies, full of ſtupid infatuation and wild romance, and upon whoſe credit, if it was not invalidated by what has been already offered, no man, who wiſhes not to be impoſed upon, would ever rely. And are theſe principles, from which to deduce duties of religion, on which to found poſitive inſtitutions of God? If *Jewiſh* legends are to be the ground work of chriſtian duties, the whole face of the goſpel may in time be ſo mangled, and disfigured, as to bear nothing at all of the aſpect of primitive and unadulterate Chriſtianity. The laſt inquiry which I propoſed is,

Whether baptiſm was intended as a temporary inſtitution, and to be confined to proſelytes only, or be of univerſal and perpetual obligation? And this is reduced to narrow limits, by my having already rendered highly improbable, the principle on which it has been chiefly attempted to be eſtabliſhed, namely, the ancient practice, long before Chriſt, of *Jewiſh* proſelyte baptiſm. I ſhall therefore only obſerve further; that whether any inſtitution of Chriſtianity be temporary, or whether it ought to be confined to ſome particular characters, can only be known one or other of theſe three ways: either by the expreſs words of the inſtitution itſelf; or from the nature

of

of the thing, and the manifeſt deſign of it; or from the practice of Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

The firſt of theſe can, I think, never fully determine either of the two points; but if the words of the inſtitution are either way concluſive, it is, moſt undoubtedly, on the ſide of the perpetual duration of baptiſm, and the univerſal extent of its obligation. And if we conſult the nature and uſes of this ordinance, we ſhall find nothing that can lead us to conclude, that it was deſigned to be only temporary, or to be confined to proſelytes. On the contrary, all the uſes of it, that are ſpecified in ſcripture, and the ſeveral expreſſions, by which the true nature of it is there repreſented, appear to me to be equally applicable to every age of the church, and to all the believers of Chriſtianity. Take baptiſm either as a public profeſſion of the chriſtian religion, by a certain ſignificant rite, which I take to be, in good part, the meaning of St. *Paul*, that *as many as are baptized into Chriſt, do put on Chriſt*; or conſider it in St. *Peter*'s notion of it, as *the anſwer of a good conſcience towards God*; or if it be properly deſcribed by the modern ſtile of a viſible admiſſion into the chriſtian church: I can ſee no reaſon, why it may not be as uſeful to one ſort of Chriſtians as to another; nor, conſequently, why the uſe of it ſhould be limited to proſelytes only. And in the practice of Chriſt and his apoſtles, which muſt now be conſidered as the only poſſible foundation of this opinion, there is as little ground for it: for how ſhould we expect to meet with an account of the baptiſm of any but proſelytes in the hiſtory of the *Acts*, which regards the firſt propagation of Chriſtianity, and the converts made to it, but gives very little account of the regulation and ſtate of chriſtian churches, after they were planted and eſtabliſhed; or in the *Epiſtles*, which were either written, upon ſome particular incidents, that happened in the churches; or againſt dangerous errors that prevailed; or to give neceſſary inſtructions in caſes of exigency, and ſuited to particular characters; but not to deſcribe, minutely and fully, the conſtitution and practice of the church?

Upon the whole, ſince there is ſo great reaſon to believe, that the ordinance of baptiſm is of authority and force in all ages, and with reſpect to all Chriſtians; let us honour God, by readily ſubmitting to this law, which be

he hath preſcribed. And to thoſe, in particular, who are fully convinced of their duty, but have hitherto failed in this part of their obedience, I beg leave to addreſs myſelf in the words of *Ananias* to *Saul*, Acts xxii. 16. with which I ſhall conclude. *And now why tarrieſt thou? Ariſe, and be baptized, and* [ſincerely repenting] *waſh away thy ſins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

The E N D.

THE NECESSITY OF *BAPTISM*, IN ORDER TO Church Membership AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNION,

SHEWN FROM *CHRIST*'S OWN WORDS, JOHN iii. 3, 5.

IN TWO LETTERS TO A LEARNED DIVINE.

The First Letter.

REVEREND SIR,

YOU have often desired me to form my thoughts concerning the obligation, which every believer in Christ is under, of submitting to the institution of baptism, in order to his being constituted a member of the christian church, *into some argument, for your consideration.* You also told me the last time, I had the pleasure of your company, that *if I can make it appear, that believers in Christ are not members of his church, till they have been baptized, it will entirely answer your objection.* And as I find what thoughts are ready to arise in your mind from the silence of those two worthy Gentlemen, to whom you applied; notwithstanding I look upon myself every way unequal to so weighty a debate, I have here ventured to submit an argument or two, to your perusal, till you shall receive from them some better answer to your objection. Nor do I doubt but that, if you find them good and conclusive, you will make the right use of them; and if they appear otherwise, you will let me know, wherein you apprehend them to be weak and insufficient.

I look upon *John* iii. 5. to be a passage of scripture very full to my purpose, and shall therefore lay before you, first, what I understand by the terms therein contained; and then my reasons, why I cannot account those christians members of the true visible church of Christ, who have never been baptized with water. In ver. 3. our Lord says in general, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*; the meaning of which, *Nicodemus* seemed wholly at a loss how to understand; and therefore our Lord in ver. 5. particularly explains, what it was that he intended by being *born again*, and *seeing the kingdom of*

God, namely, a being *born of water and of the ſpirit*, and *entering into the kingdom of God*. *By being born of water*, I underſtand a being baptized with water, the coming out of which may be the alluſion to our firſt birth: and this was a thing ſo well known by the multitudes of diſciples, who were baptized by Chriſt, and his forerunner *John*, that it needed no other explanation, or enlargement. And you very well know, that both ancient and modern chriſtian writers ſometimes expreſs the baptiſm of water, as well as the change wrought in the believer, by regeneration. It is in the conſtitutions, and by Juſtin Martyr called *the laver of regeneration*, and in ſcripture, *the waſhing of regeneration*, Titus iii. 5.

By being *born of the ſpirit*, I underſtand that moral change made by the ordinary influences of the ſpirit of God, thro' which every believer ought to paſs, before he enters into the viſible church of Chriſt; and which is expreſſed by his profeſſing repentance for ſins that are paſt, and a holy reſolution to *walk in newneſs of life* for the future; no longer to *live unto himſelf*, according to the ſinful *luſts and deſires of the fleſh, and of the mind*, *but unto* Chriſt Jeſus, walking even as he walked, 2 *Cor.* v. 15. *Eph.* ii. 3. Agreeable to this, the baptiſm of *John* is ſtiled *the baptiſm of repentance for the remiſſion of ſins*, and them therefore, who came to be baptized of him, he exhorted to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*, Mat. iii. 1. 9. 11. Mark. i. 4. Luke iii. 3, 8. And as this is the chief and principal part of the new birth, ſo our Lord in the ſixth and eighth verſes more particularly deſcribes the nature and ſpirituality of it, by an apt ſimilitude.

By entering *into the kingdom of God*, I underſtand a being received into the viſible church of Chriſt, who is our king and lawgiver, by the appointment of God, *Iſa.* ix. 6, 7. *The government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder*; and he ſays himſelf, *Matt.* xxviii. 18. *All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth.* For to ſuppoſe that by the kingdom of God is meant the kingdom of glory, or everlaſting life, would be excluding every unbaptized perſon from thence. But as I am very far from doing this, ſo I am perſuaded, that our Lord never intended the members of his church ſhould entertain any ſuch uncharitable thoughts of others: and therefore I believe, that cannot be the meaning of this phraſe, which in many places of ſcripture muſt be underſtood of the church of Chriſt, as *Matt.* xviii. 4. and xix. 24. and xxi. 31. and xxiii. 13. *Mark* xii. 34.

xii. 34. *Luke* ix. 62. and xvi. 16. *Coloſſ.* i. 13. and iv. 11. 1 *Theſſ.* ii. 12, *&c.*

Nor can our Lord's aſſertion, ver. 3. and his own explanation of it, ver. 5, *Except a man be born again of water, and of the ſpirit*, be underſtood only in ſome myſtical ſenſe; becauſe ſuch an explanation would have left *Nicodemus* full as ignorant, and as much in the dark, how to underſtand him, as he was before: but on the contrary, they are ſpoken of in ver. 5. as two things really diſtinct, and yet cloſely accompanying each other in every one, who enters into the viſible church of Chriſt. Nor can the words be underſtood of the ſupernatural gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; *for the Holy Ghoſt was not yet* given, *becauſe that Jeſus was not yet glorified*, John vii. 39. And therefore it is not at all likely, that our Lord would diſcourſe to *Nicodemus* about a thing, of which he could not poſſibly have any knowledge or underſtanding, and which was not in his power to obtain. But our Lord *ſpake and teſtified* to him, *that which* was both *known* and *ſeen*, ver. 11. which is literally true of the moral change, and the adminiſtration of holy baptiſm; and therefore he ſaid unto him, ver. 7. *Marvel not that I ſaid unto thee, ye muſt be born again.* As much as if he had ſaid, it is not coming to me, or converſing with me by night, *Nicodemus*, nor yet believing my miracles, and confeſſing that I am *a teacher come from God*, which will make you a member of my church. In order to that, you muſt be baptized, and undergo a moral change in the ſpirit and temper of your mind. After this, he upbraids him for his dulneſs and ignorance, ver. 10; and ver. 11. he blames him for not *receiving* his *witneſs*, and then adds, ver. 12. *If I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not*, that is, if you do not believe and obey me in thoſe things, which relate only to the conſtitution of my church here upon the earth, and without which neither you *Nicodemus*, nor any man elſe, can enter into, or become a member thereof: *how* can I expect that you will *believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?* things relating to my own incarnation, that ſupernatural change, which I myſelf have paſſed thro', *John* i. 14. 2 *Cor.* xv. 47. or of that change, which will take place upon my true diſciples, in the reſurrection from the dead, when they ſhall be made partakers in the glories of another, future, and better kingdom with the church triumphant; or if I ſhould deliver to you, without ſuch eaſy compariſons, as the blowing

blowing of the wind, and the birth of a man, the more ſublime parts of my heavenly doctrine. And to ſhew the neceſſity and advantage of an honeſt mind to prepare men for the reception of the truth, he ſays, *But he that doth the truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifeſt, that they are wrought in God*, ver. 21.

Having thus prepared my way, I now proceed to an argument or two, which I hope may be of ſome uſe towards removing that, which hath hitherto kept you from being obedient to the poſitive inſtitution of baptiſm, which is the entrance into the fold, or viſible church of Chriſt. And, if our Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath appointed the baptiſm of water, when accompanied with the moral change, as the only way, for believers in him to be made members of his viſible church; and hath expreſsly declared, that *except a man be born of water*, or is baptized, he cannot enter into, or become a member of his church; it then follows, that no man, who hath not been planted into the church of Chriſt by baptiſm, ought to look upon himſelf as a member thereof; unleſs he can ſhew, that Chriſt allows of ſome other way, for ſuch believers to be made members of his church here on earth. But if our Lord does any where allow, that believers in him may be planted into, or accounted members of his viſible church, tho' they never were baptized; then the place, where Chriſt doth allow it, is to be found, and baptiſm is not the only way by which believers in him may be planted together in a church ſtate; and our Lord could not have ſaid, that *Except a man be born of water*, that is baptized, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, or viſible church of Chriſt.

Again, If Chriſt hath appointed no other ordinance than that of baptiſm, for the admiſſion of believers into his viſible church, then a believer's partaking at the holy communion, without ever having been baptized, cannot conſtitute him a member of Chriſt's viſible church. The Lord's ſupper in its inſtitution was not deſigned to initiate believers into the church of Chriſt, but, on the contrary, it appears to have been inſtituted as a ſtanding ſign of that faith, into which they were baptized; and as a means of preſerving them in the chriſtian practice, and conſequently, in the enjoyment of the bleſſings and privileges of the chriſtian church beſtowed by Chriſt upon thoſe, who had before been conſtituted members of his church

church by baptiſm, adminiſtered to them according to his own appointment.

[How Chriſtians therefore can think this ordinance of baptiſm ſuch a trifling, and inſignificant ceremony, that believers may either be obedient to it, or let it alone, if they pleaſe; and yet may have a right to church membership, and lawfully partake of the holy communion, is to me very unaccountable: when the Son of God himſelf thought it his duty, and his obligation to obſerve it ſo great, that he readily undertook a long journey for that end; and would not be denied by the Baptiſt, notwithſtanding he had no ſins to confeſs and repent of, *Matt.* iii. 2. And in anſwering the Baptiſt's objection, he ſeems to lead him into an higher ſenſe of that great duty, than he had before, by ſhewing him, that every act of obedience to the poſitive appointments of heaven, was, even in the moſt innocent, virtuous, and holy perſon, a fulfilling of righteouſneſs. For of this inſtitution in particular, as performed by immerſion, in obedience to the divine command, it is worthy our obſervation, that Chriſt ſaith, *Matt.* iii. 15, 16. *Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteouſneſs:* whence we ſee how highly our bleſſed Lord thought of this ordinance of baptiſm, and conſequently, how all Chriſtians ought to think of it, when done in obedience to God. It hath not only the higheſt approbation of the Son of God, both from his words and example; but likewiſe of the moſt high, who declared the ſubmiſſion of his only begotten Son thereto, acceptable to himſelf; when he ſaid, with an audible voice from heaven, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed. And the heavens were opened unto him, and the ſpirit of God deſcended like a dove, and did light upon him,* Matt. iii. 16, 17.

Nor would our Lord enter upon his publick miniſtry, till after he had been baptized. Whether he judged it irregular, and ſo did it for an example to ſucceeding miniſters, I ſhall not pretend to ſay, tho' Mr. *Benſon* thinks it was *to initiate him into his office, as the great Meſſiah*; but *from that time* he *began to preach, and to ſay, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,* Matt. iv. 17. For being then anointed, with an unlimited meaſure of the Holy Ghoſt, *John* iii. 34. *Heb.* i. 9, he did not ceaſe to inſtruct his followers in this great duty, whereby he *made and baptized more diſciples than* John. *John* iv. 1.

And if the Lord of life and glory was himſelf ſo very zealous to overcome every difficulty in the way of his obedience,

obedience, was therein approved of the moſt high God, and endowed with the Holy Ghoſt; and after that preached the goſpel of the kingdom, inſtructed mankind in this great duty, and did not refuſe to adminiſter the ſame to diſciples with his own moſt bleſſed and holy hands, *John* iii. 22, 23, 26. alluded to perhaps, 1 *Cor.* i. 12, as the boaſt of ſome *Jewiſh* Chriſtians converted by him; and after his reſurrection from the dead, when *all power in heaven and in earth* was *given to* him, commiſſioned his apoſtles and their ſucceſſors, to *teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*; and encouraged them to continue the practice of it with this gracious promiſe, that his preſence ſhould *always* be with them therein, *even to the end of world*, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. *Mark* xvi. 16: men ſurely cannot have ſtronger motives to their own obedience, and their zealous concern, and unwearied endeavours to promote the ſame in others; and therefore, one would think that no Chriſtians, who have ever ſeriouſly conſidered theſe things, could be ſo forgetful and indifferent, as to account it a trifling, inſignificant ceremony, unneceſſary to chriſtian church memberſhip and communion.

The great apoſtle St. *Paul* was not ſo indifferent about it. For as *John*'s baptiſm, tho' the baptiſm of repentance, did not fully come up to that of Chriſt; the perſons baptized making therein no confeſſion of this great foundation article of the chriſtian faith, upon which the church was to be built, *that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God*, Matt. xvi. 16. Acts viii. 37: and it not being adminiſtered according to Chriſt's commiſſion, *Matt.* xxviii. 19. *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt:* he rebaptized thoſe twelve diſciples of *John* at *Epheſus*, which was ſo highly approved of God; that *when the apoſtle had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghoſt came on them; and they ſpake with tongues, and prophefied*, Acts xix. 6. We have here a very encouraging motive to the duty, and alſo an unanſwerable argument againſt perſons reſting contented with any imperfect adminiſtration of Chriſt's inſtitution, ſince it appears from hence, that nothing leſs than a ſtrict adherence to Chriſt's appointments, in all things relating to baptiſm, is ſufficient for our acceptance, and to intitle us to the privileges of his church, and the ſpecial bleſſings promiſed to it.

And it is remarkable, that Chriſt had gathered a church by that baptiſm, which he calls a *fulfilling all righteouſneſs*,

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three years, before he inſtituted his holy ſupper. Nor does it appear from the nature of it, that he ever would have inſtituted that ordinance, if he had been always to continue with his church in perſon. And there is ſome reaſon from 1 *Cor.* xi. 26. to think, that tho' baptiſm ſhall continue *to the end of the world*; yet this ſhall be laid aſide, when Chriſt ſhall come and appear again among his church and people. But as he was then about to leave them, and they would be deprived of the privilege and bleſſing of converſing with him, and receiving the divine oracles from his mouth; he inſtituted his holy ſupper to be ſtatedly obſerved in his church, that, by the uſe of it, he might be frequently brought to their remembrance, as the moſt likely means to cheriſh and keep alive in their minds a due regard to the doctrines and precepts, which he had given them, together with the other exceeding great bleſſings, which they will receive by him according to promiſe. This alſo had a natural tendency to revive in their minds the obligations, which they are under to him, in having been conſtituted members of his church by baptiſm. And it was only to ſuch perſons, who were thus made members of his church, that he ſpake, when he inſtituted his holy ſupper; ſaying, *This do in remembrance of me.* Now this being the end, for which the Lord's-ſupper was appointed; it follows, that, if an unbaptized believer partakes thereof an hundred times, it will never conſtitute him a member of the viſible church of Chriſt, any more than *Nicodemus*'s going to Chriſt by night, and converſing with him, believing his miracles, and owning him to be *a teacher come from God*, conſtituted him a member of Chriſt's viſible church. Our Lord has rejected ſuch a faith, and ſuch a coming to him, *Luke* vi. 46. *And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I ſay?* The believer, whom he approves, is one that *cometh to* him, giving heed to his ſayings, and in conſequence of that, is found *doing them*, digging deep, and laying his foundation on a rock, ſo that it cannot be moved. And that no man might fancy himſelf a member of his viſible church, or flatter himſelf with being eſteemed the friend and diſciple of Chriſt upon any terms, which are ſhort of uniform obedience; our bleſſed Lord has plainly ſignified, that he will not look upon any as ſuch, who have not reſpect to all his commands; when he ſays, *John* xv. 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you:* which ſhould induce every believer

conſciantiouſly to obſerve the poſitive, as well as the moral precepts of his goſpel. He hath alſo in the ſtrongeſt manner aſſured us, that *Except a man be born of water, and of the ſpirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* So that every unbaptized believer, who hath been a partaker of that ordinance, which was inſtituted only for thoſe, who had been conſtituted members of the church of Chriſt by baptiſm; and no where appears to have been given to, or deſigned for any others, ſhould ſeriouſly conſider; whether his firſt participation was not ſo far from conſtituting him a member of Chriſt's viſible church, that, on the contrary, it might perhaps be only a profanation of a divine inſtitution, of which he had then no right at all to partake, tho' he was at the ſame time a believer in Chriſt; becauſe it appears clearly enough from Chriſt's own words, *John* iii. 5, that no man who is not *born of water, and of the ſpirit*, that is, no unbaptized perſon, *can ſee the kingdom of God*, or *enter into* his church.

[Moreover all ſuch perſons have the more reaſon to conclude thus, when thoſe expreſs paſſages of Juſtin Martyr, and the apoſtolical conſtitutions are ſeriouſly conſidered by them. The conſtitutions, in the office for the euchariſt, B. vii. ch. 25. ſay, 'Let no one eat of theſe things that is 'not initiated; but thoſe only who have been baptized in- 'to the death of the Lord. But if any one that is not 'initiated conceal himſelf, and partake of the ſame, *he* 'eats eternal damnation; becauſe, being not of the faith 'of Chriſt, he has partaken of ſuch things as it is not 'lawful for him to partake of, to his own puniſhment. 'But if any one is a partaker through ignorance, inſtruct 'him quickly, and initiate him, that he may not go out 'and deſpiſe you.' And that theſe evils might be effectually prevented, it is thus appointed, after the public ſervice is over, and before the celebration of the euchariſt, B. viii. ch. 5. 'Let the deacon aſcend upon ſome high 'ſeat, and proclaim, Let none of the hearers, let none of 'the unbelievers ſtay.' Nay, ſuch ſtrict regard is therein paid to the words of Chriſt, that no unbaptized perſon might ſee the kingdom of God, or enter into his church, that ch. xii. after the prayers for catechumens, and ſeveral other ſorts of perſons, who are bid to depart at the cloſe of each prayer, the deacon is appointed to proclaim a ſecond time, 'Let none of the catechumens, let none 'of the hearers, let none of the unbelievers, let none of 'the heterodox ſtay here. You who have prayed the

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'foregoing prayers depart.' Something of this is retained in our eſtabliſhed church; for ſhe will not ſuffer any perſons to be preſent at the Lord's-Supper, but thoſe only, who communicate; tho' I have heard of an inſtance or two, when at the conſecration of a new church or chappel, the people in general were permitted to ſtay as ſpectators, tho' they did not communicate. But in common it is quite otherwiſe; and yet all the diſſenters are by law forbid to ſhut the doors of their meeting houſes, even whilſt this holy ordinance is adminiſtering. And how very carefully theſe rules, appointed in the conſtitutions, were obſerved by all Chriſtians, in the firſt and pureſt ages of the church, is manifeſt from the apologies written by *Juſtin*, *Tertullian*, and others, who vindicated the chriſtian church from thoſe odious calumnies, which the heathen caſt upon them, on account of their not ſuffering any perſons to be preſent at the celebration of the Lord's-ſupper, but only thoſe, who were members of the church. The words of *Juſtin* are very clear, where ſpeaking of the euchariſt he ſays, "To which none are admitted, "but who believes our doctrine to be true, having been "waſhed in the laver of regeneration for the remiſſion of "ſins, and living as Chriſt has taught. As many as be-"ing convinced do believe the things we teach, and pro-"miſe to live according to them, after prayer and faſt-"ing, are led by us to the water, and are regenerated "after the ſame manner as we alſo were."[9]

How therefore any congregation of Chriſtians, orderly conſtituted upon the ſix foundation principles of the doctrine of Chriſt, ſet forth as the rule of all chriſtian ſettlement, inſeparably appertaining to every believer, *Heb.* vi. 1, 2. can think of admitting perſons to the Lord's-table, who, they know and believe in their own conſciences, were never born of water, and of the ſpirit, according to the appointment of Chriſt in his holy word; or how they can vindicate themſelves therein, it behoves them ſeriouſly to conſider. Is it not more likely to hinder the obedience of ſuch perſons, and keep them from ſubmitting to baptiſm, rather than to be any means of ſtirring them up to their duty? Moreover, not only they, but other perſons alſo may perhaps be induced to think, it looks too much like renouncing their own baptiſm; or at

9 *Emlyn's* Tracts, p. 456. *Reeves's* Apologies, p. 120. and p. 104—106.

leaſt a tacit declaration to all men, that in their eſteem it is an indifferent thing. But can it be reaſonably thought, the Son of God, the Lord of life and glory, would inſtitute an ordinance of ſo trifling and inſignificant a nature, that any man may be obedient to it, or let it alone, as he pleaſes; and yet be received to memberſhip in his church, and alſo partake of his holy ſupper; notwithſtanding his expreſs words, that *Except a man be born again of water and of the ſpirit, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God*, or *enter into* his church, *John* iii. 3. 5. And whether the guilt of ſuch a profanation by unbaptized communicants may not be laid to their charge in the awful day of account, is what, in my opinion, they ought to weigh maturely, and conſider with the utmoſt ſerioufneſs. This is certain, that there can be no neceſſity for admitting ſuch perſons, and it is undoubtedly moſt ſafe to avoid any hazard of the divine diſpleaſure.]

And if an unbaptized believer, who has once communicated, ought not then to have come to the Lord's table; becauſe he had not been planted into the church of Chriſt by baptiſm, in obedience to our Lord's command; he ought alſo to conſider, whether every time he communicates at the Lord's table, whilſt he remains unbaptized, is any thing elſe but a repetition of the firſt profanation? For if it was at firſt unlawful or unfit for him to partake of the Lord's-ſupper, becauſe he was not baptized; it muſt and will be unlawful and unfit for him to partake thereof at any time, ſo long as he remains unbaptized. For a perſon's once doing a thing, which he had no right to do, can never give him a right to do the ſame thing again. And tho' perhaps ſuch a faulty and unlawful communicating at the Lord's table, when ariſing from the powerful influence of a wrong education, and done by a believer in the integrity of his heart, knowing no better than that he might lawfully, nay, ſuppoſing perhaps, that it was his duty to partake of that ſupper, may be ſo far from being laid to his charge as a ſin, that the integrity of his heart and the ſincerity of his intentions, tho' not the actual partaking, may be acceptable to God: yet after he comes to know, and to be convinced, that no man ought to come to the Lord's table, till he has firſt been baptized; his own partaking there again, without ſubmitting to the ordinance of baptiſm, may be to his condemnation. From the guilt of which, and all other ſins, an aſſured promiſe is made over to the ſincere believer, upon his obedience to

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the positive institution of baptism, *Acts* ii. 38. and xxii. 16. *Mark* xvi. 16. a blessing, not so certainly to be depended upon by any unbaptized believer in the performance of any other christian duty whatsoever, whilst he lives in the wilful neglect of this. And therefore let them who live in the wilful neglect of baptism, well consider, what the servants of *Naaman* said to their master; *If the prophet had bid thee* do some *great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, wash and be clean?* And as the *Syrian* had no promise of a cure any other way, than by dipping himself in *Jordan*, and could not therefore have the least ground to hope for his ever being cleansed from his leprosy, if he wilfully neglected to do this, according to the direction given him, 2 *Kings* v. 10: so it behoves all unbaptized persons to consider, whether they can have so good grounds to hope for the remission of sin in the neglect of that ordinance, to which it is annexed, as if they are sincerely obedient to it, according to the appointment of God.

I make no doubt but your candour will overlook the common errors of a writer; and that you will not account me uncharitable in my zeal for maintaining to the ordinance of baptism the use and end, for which it was designed; altho' I cannot allow those Christians to be members of the true visible church of Christ, who have never yet *put on Christ* by baptism, or *been planted together in the likeness of his death* by *being baptized into Christ:* since I am convinced, that he has not appointed any other way, for believers in him to be initiated into, or made members of, his church here on earth. And I am very far from carrying what I have here said any further. But am,

Dear Sir, your affectionate, sincere Friend,

Norwich, April 18, 1740.

and very humble Servant,

GRANTHAM KILLINGWORTH.

The

The Second Letter.

REVEREND SIR,

THE conceit, which you mentioned to me in our laſt converſation, that *all perſons become members of the church of Chriſt, as ſoon as they believe in Chriſt, or are perſuaded in their minds, that the chriſtian revelation is from God; tho' they never were obedient to any inſtitution of Chriſt*, hath ſomething in it ſo very wild and romantic, that, upon this ſuppoſition, baptiſm would ſoon be laid aſide; and it muſt be impoſſible for the church of Chriſt to maintain any order or diſcipline, or indeed to know who are, or who are not related to them, in the goſpel of Chriſt. For, if there is no initiatory rite to be obſerved, whereby believers are to be conſtituted members of his viſible church, can they be at all accountable to any church for their converſation? Or is it poſſible, even for groſs immoralities, to caſt thoſe out of the church, who have never been received into it by any rite? At this rate, tho' a man walks ever ſo diſorderly, yet if he ſays he believes the chriſtian inſtitution, he may ſtill think himſelf a member of the viſible church of Chriſt, whether others will own him, or not, and who then can pretend to ſay he is not? This notion therefore, as it gives ſome encouragement to licentiouſneſs, it ſeems alſo to be an inlet to diſorder and confuſion, and would render it almoſt impoſſible to deſcribe, what a viſible church of Chriſt is.

But as we were both agreed, that *baptiſm is an introductory ordinance*, I thought my arguments from *John* iii. 5. ſufficient to take off the force of your objection. Nor did I imagine, that by your giving up the very foundation of your own objection, I ſhould have any further occaſion to ſhew, that baptiſm is the initiating ordinance, by which believers are to be taken into the church of Chriſt: but that it is ſo, I think, is evident enough from the following ſcriptures.

Acts

Acts ii. 41. *Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized: and the same day there were added* unto them, [the church consisting of an hundred and twenty men and women] *about three thousand souls.* Is it not the plain, obvious sense of this place, that those three thousand believers, who gladly received the gospel preached by St. *Peter*, were thereupon initiated into the church by baptism; and being by this ordinance constituted members of the church of Christ, were admitted to all the privileges and benefits of the same? For it is said, ver. 42. *They continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* After which we read, that the Lord wrought so powerfully upon the hearts of the people, by the *wonders and signs—done by the apostles*, and by their *daily* preaching *in the temple*, that there were *added to the church daily such as should be saved.* ver. 43, 47. And how this was done, we are fully informed in the 41st verse, as hath been observed.

We have also a like expression with this, *Acts* v. 14. *And believers were the more added to the Lord*, [or to the church, which is his body] *multitudes both of men and women.* I observe here, that those persons were believers, before they were added to the church; and because they were believers, something was done, whereby they were added to the Lord. And that this was baptism is sufficiently plain, from *Acts* ii. 38, 41. But if a bare believing in Christ, or a declaration, that they believed the christian religion was from God, added them to his visible church; or was sufficient of itself to constitute them members thereof, without there being baptized, St. *Luke* would hardly have expressed himself in such terms, as plainly shew, that believing, and being added to the church, were two distinct things; so that the former was only a qualification for the latter. The context in this place likewise plainly shews, according to *Grotius* and *Beza*, as Dr. *Whitby* observes, *that there were many believers, who magnified the apostles, but durst not join themselves to, or associate with them as members*, because they *were not yet of the church.*

I mentioned to you what the apostle says, *Rom.* vi. 5. of Christians in his time being *planted together in the likeness of Christ's death*; thereby alluding to baptism, as the way by which they were constituted members of his visible church. Nor can any thing less be understood by their *being baptized into Jesus Christ*, ver. 3, or into the church, which